MINUTES OF THE `KICK OFF MEETING' FOR THE TARGET PROJECT

APRIL 15TH AND 16TH, 1996, Maastricht

Present:

Belinda Tanner	- Technology Centre Limburg (TCL), Heerlen- Chair
Frank Boss	- Technology Centre Limburg (TCL), Heerlen
Alice Gorissen	- Technology Centre Limburg, Heerlen
Marleen van der Laan	- Technology Centre Limburg, Heerlen
Bernard Black	- Western Connect LTD, Derry
Damian Wilson	- Western Connect LTD, Derry
Pat Coman	- RTC Tallaght, Dublin
Michele Crudele	- Associazione Centro Elis, Rome
Brendan Doyle	- Camara Oviedo, Spain
Peter Dutton	- Hertford Regional College, Broxbourne
Bengt Kroon	- Swedish War College, Östersund
Robbie Hegarty	- Star Business Communications Centre, Derry
Gerry McGuckin	- North West Institute of Further and Higher Education, Derry
Luk Indesteege	- VIA vzw, Diepenbeek
Rob Vanderstraeten	- VIA vzw, Diepenbeek
Tony Stevenson	- North Trafford College, Manchester

MONDAY 15 APRIL

1. Welcome and Introduction

Mr Boss welcomes participants and opens the meeting. It is emphasised that during the following two days, decisions concerning the managment and activities of the project should be agreed upon. Apologies for absence are received from the Greek Productivity Centre, CIEFOP Development and Ms Ann-Marie Slavin of Western Connect Ltd.

2. Review of Key Project Aims and Objectives

Mr McGuckin provides an overview of the aims, objectives and development of the TARGET project.

The key aim and objectives of the TARGET project are described as follows:
-     to link training centres (developers and trainers) to a transnational training network to address all issues involved in the development and delivery of flexible, accessible, cost-effective training materials and programmes ;
-     based on the results of feasibility studies and technical evaluations,   implement and operate a trans-regional distance learning   platform using Euro-ISDN to be piloted at various sites across   Europe.

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3.   Distance Education and Technologies - General Overview

Belinda Tanner presents a résumé of key issues associated with distance learning. Ms Tanner highlights the barriers and inaccessibility which can be imposed by conventional methods of training. In contrast, Open Distance Learning training methods increase access to training and provide the opportunity for flexible training solutions tailored to the needs of individuals.

A detailed explanation of the benefits gained from ODL methods, both from a traniee and employer perspective is provided.

Ms Tanner then stresses the importance of effective, thorough student support systems for ODL progammes. Such support systems help to reduce one of the main weaknesses of ODL, namely the sense of isolation felt by learners which can lead to high drop out rates.

Ms Tanner provides an overview of the different technologies used to support ODL program-mes. This includes descriptions of the facilities offered by: E-mail; computer conferencing and interactive satellite broadcasts. A description of the various videoconferencing systems and facilities provided by these systems is given. Finally, Ms Tanner highlights some of fundamental factors to consider during videoconference sessions such as the need to highly organise and prepare conference sessions in advance. Videoconference sessions need to have clearly defined strucutres. This is particularly relevant with multi-point, voice-controlled sessions where the risk of the conference becoming disjointed is greater and the need for highly structured, moderated conferences is paramount.

4.   WorkPackage 1- Information needs Analysis

The Chair states that Marleen van der Laan and Alice Gorissen, both from the TCL, will be responsible for Workpackages 1-5 of the project. Marleen van der Laan then presents the goals to be reached within WP 1. In the discussion which follows afterwards, it emerges that the original deadline given (10th May 1995) for partners to return thier regional needs analysis information would not be realistic. However, participants agree that it is important to obtain information concerning the traning programmes and training needs in the different coun-tries/regions. Consequently, agreement is reached to separate WP 1 into the following two sections:

WP 1 - Section 1:

Each regional co-ordinator will investigate within his/her region companies which may be suitable for involvement in the TARGET project (contact 1 - 4 companies).

Each partner will then define and describe the training needs of the company (or companies, if possible within budget) selected to participate in the project.

This information will contain all of the following:
- the type of training to be conducted in the pilot;
- the aim of the training;
- the target group (level);
- the duration of the training;
- the number of trainees (if already known), participating in the training;
- the preferred training methods;
- the types of new technologies to be used in the pilot;
- concerning the training materials to be used - will these be adapted from existing materials (the majority) or will materials be developed to relate to the new techno-logies to be used and the needs of the company participating in the pilot project?
- the evaluation criteria to be used by each partner.

DECISION: Deadline for this first part of the Needs Analysis Report -
15 MAY 1996.
All information to be sent, preferably via E-mail. to:-
Alice Gorissen
TCLCOT@XS4ALL.nl
Technology Centre Limburg
Postbus 483, 6400 AL HEERLEN, The Netherlands.

WP 1 - Section 2:
It is agreed that the final result of section 2 of Workpackage 1 will be a profile for training on a regional and a transEuropean base, covering a set of training and development needs adressed by the project.

Each partner should gather information and make a description of the following three items:
- description of the training needs;
- description of the training offered by the organisation;
- description of the training offered by the organisation by distance learning;

Out of these descriptions TCL will define:
- co-operation models for distance learning on a trans-regional basis for this project;
- co-operation models for distance learning collaboration in the future.

From this last point, not only will current needs and training be matched but also development needs will be identified to increase the possibility for larger scale distance learning transregional collaboration after the completion of the project.

It is agreed that Marleen and Alice will design a questionnaire for WP1.2 which will be distributed to all regional co-ordinators by 15th May. The co-ordinators will return these questionnaires no later than 15th June. (Please do not hesitate to contact either Alice or Marleen if you have any further queries)

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DECISION: Deadline date for Section 2 of the Needs Analysis Report -
15 June 1996.
All questionnaires to be returned to Alice Gorissen, TCL (preferably via) E-mail.

5.   **Technical Management Infrastructure**

The Technical Manager for the Target project, Mr Bernard Black (Western Connect Ltd) provides an overview of the activities of Western Connect Ltd and presents the technical management roles and infrastructure.

It is highlighted that the technical management is responsible for the following workpackages:
- WP 2, Technical evaluation report, available the end of July 1996;
- WP 5, Operational pilot platform, available the end of
  November 1996;
- WP 8/9, Pilot platform Evaluation Report, available end April 1997;

Mr Black circulates to all partners a questionnaire designed to assess the technical equipment and systems used throughout the partnership (partners who are not present will recieve this document by post). It is
highlighted that this questionnaire should also be used to assess the technical equipment and systems used in each participating company. Mr Black requests the questionnaires to be returned within two weeks.

The process of the overall evaluation and feasibility study period is then described. On receipt of the initial (WP1 section 1) needs analysis report, (15 May) the Technical Manager will provide an evaluation report of the technical infrastructure and equipment needed by the partnership.

Mr Black advises all partners to order an ISDN line immediately to ensure that all have access by the end of May. It is added that the participating company should also have an ISDN connection by the end of 1996.
It is noted that Western Connect Ltd will send to each partner an ISDN awareness pack including a video detailing the facilities offered through ISDN.

Finally, Mr Black informs partners of his direct telephone number: 00 44 1504 37 38 38.

6.   **Project Management Structure**

The proposal presented by Belinda Tanner outlining the overall structure of the management of the project is approved. Blank contact lists are circulated to identify within each organisation the person to be involved in the training workgroup, teachnical workgroup and financial administration of the project. It is agreed that each partner will return completed contact lists to the project manager within two weeks.

7.   Operational Management Services

Belinda Tanner presents the day to day operational management services which will be provided to support the project by the Technology Centre Limburg.

8.   Transnational Project Funding Arrangements

Mr Mc Guckin presents this item and states that the project is funded on a 50% matched funding basis. This means that each partner will receive 50% of the funding directly from the Commission (via the NorthWest Institute of Further and Higher Education).   The remaining 50% will be derived from match funding arrangements organised by each partner. It is noted that this match funding can be provided either through sponsorship of local companies, or from the participating organisations themselves in terms of labour/equipment used to carry out the project activities.

It is agreed that all air fares associated with the activities of this project   will   use   APEX tariffs. First Class rail fare will be permitted.

After discussion it is agreed that management meeting costs will be organised as follows: - the host organisation will make the arrangements, pay the bill and send invoices to the organi-sations concerned based on a division of costs per day per person.

9.   Project Communication Methods

Agreement is reached on the choice of E-mail as the main mode of communication.

DECISION: **Every member of the consortium will provide their E-mail address to the project manager within 2 weeks.**

10.   Reporting and Evaluation Procedures

Belinda Tanner states that every partner will be required to complete a progress reports every three months. It is stressed that such frequent feedback from the regional co-ordinators is essential to ensure thorough evaluation which will contribute to the six monthly reports and ultimately the final evaluation report.

A set of forms outlining the main reporting areas (key achievements, obstacles encountered and financial details) and deadline dates for submission to the project manager is distributed to all members.

However, a request for more detailed information outlining more clearly the areas to be included in the 3 monthly report is requested by the partners. Consequently, the project manager agrees to circulate more detailed progress requirements within the next two weeks. It is agreed however that all dates for submission outlined in the distributed forms will remain.

The Project Manager suggests that each partner should keep a `Project Diary' (updated each week) to maintain an accurate record of all activities associated with the Project. This diary will prove to be an effective tool when completing the 3 monthly reprots.

For the final evaluation, the results of the participating companies will also be included.

TUESDAY 16 APRIL 1996

11.   Transnational Project Activities

The Chair remarks that previous discussions concerning the transnational elements of the project should be clarified. It is agreed by all participants that the transnational elements of the project will be as follows:

-        Use Euro-ISDN platform to deliver training materials throughout the partnership as identified by the information needs analysis
         investigations;
-        Use Euro-ISDN platform to exchange regional experiences on the use of videoconferencing and other technologies used for the pilots;
-        Use Euro-ISDN platform to exchange experiences on distance   learning   methods implemented during the project activities.

12.   Project Time Schedule

The proposed project time schedule is distributed during the meeting. After discussion it is agreed to slightly amend the proposed schedule. This revised project work plan will be incorporated in the final transnational document.

13.   Experiences of partners in the use of Videoconferencing and other Technologies

The Chair invites participants to describe thier experiences in the use of videoconferencing to date.

Bengt Kroon, Swedish War College.

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Colonel Kroon explains that the Swedish War College has been using videoconferencing for the past two and a half years and adds that PictureTel is the type of equipment used. The systems have two motorised cameras and the teacher is also the technical operator.

It is noted that due to the fact that training was previously carried out over three geographically dispersed locations, video conferencing became an attractive solution to reduce the high costs associated with travelling. The system is used for meetings, staff work and training.

Colonel Kroon adds that the videoconference sessions used for training are not as successful as conferences used for meetings between members of staff. This is largely due to the fact that teachers are unsure about the quality of the lessons they deliver via videoconferencing.

It is noted that the two days of training on how to use the systems and videoconferencing technique received by the teachers was insufficient. The speed at which the information and pictures are sent at the moment is too slow and detracts from the overall effectiveness of the tutorials delivered via videoconferences. Colonel Kroon adds that teachers need to be trained very thoroughly on the methods associated with effective videoconferencing to optimise the benefits.

Finally it is noted that the Swedish War College had had little previous experience of working with Multi-Media materials and open and distance learning techniques. Moreover, there was a drive to use such technologies as a means of reducing costs. This proved to be successful as within 6 months the initial costs had been returned and each future videoconference reduced expenditure quite considerably.

Peter Dutton, Hertford Regional College, Centre for Multi-media Interactive Technologies

Mr Dutton explains how the main focus of the Multimedia centre within Hertford Regional College is the assessment of different learning strategies related the use of New Technologies. He adds that videoconferencing both point to point and multipoint is widely used at the college.

Mr Dutton remarks how one particular company approached the Centre as they wanted a CAD training programme combined with distance learning techniques. Mr Dutton remarks that the conventional method of learning combined with distance learning methods produced negative results. Consequently, the style of training needed to be changed.

In response, students were given ownership over their learning and became responsible for their own individualised training. The initial input from the teacher is only 10-15 minutes. If necessary, the trainee can contact the teacher via videoconferencing. However, videoconferencing is more widely used to share applications to enable both teacher and trainee to view a problem and find a solution simultaneously. Mr Dutton stresses that this application sharing facility offered by videoconferencing is viewed as being a prime tool.

The model developed consists of the following:

- Self Instruction Packages;
- Videoconference sessions;
- Application training;
- Video conferencing as support tool.

Mr Dutton highlights certain problems associated with videoconferencing. These include the difficulty of obtaining accurate assessments of what trainees have actually learnt during a videoconference session (this feedback is also a very important factor) and the difficulty of creating a personal rapport with learners.

Finally, it is stressed that teachers need to change their style of teaching to fit with the educational opportunties provided by distance learning and the new technologies used to support this mode of study.

Robert Hegarty, NorthWest Star Business Communications Centre

Mr Hegarty explains how in 1990-1991 the Star programme was introduced in Northern Ireland. This programme aimed to create Star Centres
throughout Northern Ireland to demonstrate the facilities offered by ISDN to local businesses and schools.

Presently, these centres demonstrate videoconferencing systems and techniques. Additionally, the Star Centre has experience of desktop conferencing, document sharing and collaborative working techniques. Mr Hegarty remarks that in the future plans to create 2 virtual classroom and to provide training for teachers in the use of videoconferencing, the internet and using a modem are envisaged.

14. **Provisional Ideas for Pilots Projects**

The Chair asks participants to describe potential companies within their region who may become involved in the TARGET project. Certain partners provide the following comments:

Michele Crudele, Associazione Centro Elis
Mr Crudele remarks that he is thinking about involving a brewery in the project. He adds that this company want to use video conferencing between the different sites of the company based at various locations across Italy. Additionally, this particular company is interested to receive technical training in the English language.

Bengt Kroon, Swedish War College.

Colonel Kroon states that he would be interested in providing training in Business English to companies. He adds that training programmes in this area have been developed by a university in Sweden who use the programme at the moment.

Pat Coman, RTC Tallaght

Mr Coman remarks that he is hoping to work with Intel to carry out the project activities. He adds that they are interested in developing Self Instructive Packages for their employees to use during quiet periods at the workplace. Open and distance learning methods will be utilised to carry out these objectives.

Marleen van der Laan, TCL

Mrs van der Laan notes that she hopes to add the tool of video-conferencing to a training programme which already exists and includes paper based and multi-media material (10 CD-i's). Videoconferencing will be used more extensively to support the prgramme in the future.

15.   Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in Spain between the 27 - 28 September 1996 (including the night of Saturday 28 September to allow for cheaper air fare).

The Chair thanks members for their contributions and closes the meeting.

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