



European Commission



**European
Assistive Technology
Information Network**

FINAL REPORT

of the eTen/Eastin project (1.03.2004 – 30.11.2005)



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The result of the EASTIN project is the ***EASTIN network*** – a new trans-European information service on Assistive Technologies.

Assistive Technology is any product or technology-based service that enables disabled or elderly people in their daily lives, education, work or leisure. Information on Assistive Technologies plays a fundamental role in helping people with disabilities, elderly people, their families and all professionals working in this field to find out technical solutions to daily life problems, or to develop new solutions.

The EASTIN network responds to this information need at European level by aggregating the data provided by six major National Information systems on assistive technologies, and making them accessible in all Partners' languages through the Internet. In order to achieve this result, the six Partners' information systems have been improved and harmonised in the course of the EASTIN project – according to agreed standards – and integrated through a common website.

The key components of the EASTIN network are:

- The multilingual ***EASTIN website***, equipped with ***advanced search engines*** able to perform search and retrieval operations across all the partners' databases, in any of the partners' languages.
- ***Six improved national systems*** containing data on assistive technology products available on the European market, and other associated information.
- The ***EASTIN Association***, an organisation providing the suitable framework for continuing collaboration among the partners in the long run, in order to ensure the operation of the EASTIN website, to explore possible further developments, and also to proceed with further harmonisation activities and coordinate action related to data collection and maintenance.

The main target groups of the services delivered by the EASTIN network are:

- *End users* of AT products, such as people with disabilities, their families and primary carers
- *Professionals* working in the field of disability, or involved at any level in the AT policy or in AT service delivery systems
- *Industrialists*, such as manufacturers and suppliers of AT products

The EASTIN network gradually took shape within 21 months timetable. Great efforts were devoted to exchanging national experiences; to harmonising the databases' contents and integrating them in such a way that searches could be performed through a single website across all databases; and to improving the capability of the overall network to meet the citizens' information needs.

Market validation was an essential component of this process. It was carried out in three stages, chiefly through interaction with significant samples of the three main target groups in all Partners' Countries.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

There are over 50.000 assistive technology products, nowadays available in Europe, with estimated turnover 30 billion Euros. Every European citizen can take advantage of these products for a variety of purposes (therapy, training, personal care, mobility, communication, home adaptation, education, work, leisure, etc.), but it's sometimes really difficult to find information far from each Country.

Internet society is changing the way of thinking and working: thousands of people with disabilities, caregivers, health and social professionals, public administrators, manufacturers or suppliers, try every day to find answers to their needs by using the Web.

Before the EASTIN project started, Internet-based information services specialised in this area and with nation-wide coverage were available only in some Countries: Italy, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Spain. In another Country (The Netherlands) there was a national information system only available off line (Cd Rom). But there was not an unique access point for all people interested in information on assistive technologies all over Europe.

Hence, the EASTIN vision took wing: to establish a trans-European information network on Assistive Technologies (AT) for people with disabilities, by putting together the expertise of the existing national systems and aggregating the contents from their databases. These systems are:

- In Italy, *the SIVA system, operated by the Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi Onlus.*
- In Germany, *the REHADAT system, operated by the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln.*
- In Denmark, *the HMI-BASEN system, operated by the Danish Centre for Technical Aids.*
- In the United Kingdom, *the DLFDATA system, operated by the Disabled Living Foundation.*
- In Spain, *the CATALOGO DE AYUDAS TECNICAS, operated by CEAPAT, the National Centre for Personal Autonomy and Technical Aids.*
- In The Netherlands, *the HULPMIDDELENWIJZER system, operated by iRV, the Institute for Rehabilitation Research.*

The EASTIN project had the ambition to answer a lot of questions. How many assistive technology products and services are there in Europe? What are their technical specifications? Where are they available? Is there material or documentation that can guide users for their appropriate choice and application? Can we contribute to the awareness and the empowerment of European citizens with disabilities, by making AT information available in each Country language?

Within 21 months timetable, the networking of the six major European AT information providers gradually took shape. Great efforts were devoted to exchanging national experiences; to harmonising the databases' contents and integrating them in such a way that searches could be performed through a single website across all databases; to improving the capability of the overall network to meet the citizens' information needs.

Market validation was an essential component of this process. It was carried out in three stages, chiefly through interaction with a significant sample of the three main target groups: ***end users, professionals in the field of disability***, and the ***AT industry***.

The first stage was concentrated on the six existing systems; it provided a thorough understanding of the strengths (to be fixed) and the weaknesses (to be exploited) of each national system. This made it possible to identify which improvements should be carried out on each national system in order to better meet the audience's expectations. It also helped understand which *winning features* deserved to be exploited in the whole network.

The second stage focused on the design requirements the network should meet. The validation was based upon a mock-up, that simulated how the future EASTIN website would work as network integrator. The findings led to finalising the harmonisation and integration specification, which in turn allowed to start the technical activities needed for their implementation. By mid May 2005 the first fully-working prototype of the EASTIN was ready for the last validation stage.

The third stage looked at the network as a whole. Extended tests of its technical sustainability were carried out until achieving the level of performance and usability that met the audience expectations. The validation activities addressed also other dimensions that yield impact on the market viability, such as *usage sustainability* (motivation for the audience to use the network, usefulness of the information delivered, etc..), *financial sustainability* (how the resources are being ensured for the operation in the long run) and *organisational sustainability* (what's the most effective and efficient organisational model).

As this process moved to the end, technical adjustments were carried out to improve the network until achieving the final version, and strategic decisions were taken by all partners to ensure operation in the long run. The Final Business and Market Deployment Plan contains – among other things – the agreed roadmap for the future.

The project ended with a successful implementation of the trans-national network. The *European Assistive Technology Information Network* (EASTIN) is now operational; EASTIN is also the name of the *European Association* being established among all partners to ensure operation in the long run and to provide a permanent framework for further collaboration; the network is accessible through a common website (www.eastin.info) as well as from the six national systems; it is the most comprehensive web-service in Europe that makes available – anywhere, at any time, in the user's language and in an user-friendly and accessible manner – a complete set of information, educational and guidance tools in the domain of Assistive Technologies.

Empowering citizens with disabilities to choose an independent lifestyle is one of today's key issues in the European Society. Knowledge means power. Access to such knowledge empowers people in their everyday lives to make decisions that improve the quality of their lives, inform choices and ensures full participation without any kind of discrimination. The EASTIN network is instrumental to such goal.

The three scenarios below are just a sample of common situations where the EASTIN network may be useful to citizens.

Scenario 1: a person looking for a solution to a problem related to his disability

Mr G has muscular dystrophy, and due to worsening of his functional conditions he needs to find out a technical solution for maintaining his mobility, especially in relation to the tasks and responsibilities he has to fulfil at work. He has inability to walk, just little hand control, and severe problem with maintaining a comfortable seating position. He may have in mind that a powered wheelchair with special seating facilities and advanced electronic control might be useful, the problem is how to find out the right device that meets exactly his needs and is financially affordable. By browsing the “assistive technology products” section of the EASTIN trans-european information network, he can first get an idea of what technical solutions are possible and available on the market all over Europe (awareness). Secondly, by browsing the “associated information” section he will find guidance, hints and educational material on points to consider when choosing such kind of devices in relation to his needs (education). Third, he will find the devices available on the market that are most likely to match his needs, and will be able carry out comparisons among them in relation to performance, quality, costs involved, post-sale services etc (information). Fourth, by jumping into the national information systems he will be able to identify who is able to supply such devices in a given Country, the possible funding channels for its purchase, who is able to provide the needed commercially-independent professional assessment, guidance and training prior to take such an important decision. Without the information service provided by the trans-national network he would be dependent on just national information (to which such device might be unknown because native of another Country), and lose a lot of important data for decision-making that are currently scattered throughout the various systems and are inaccessible to him due to language barriers.

Scenario 2: a rehabilitation professional assisting a client in the choice of an appropriate assistive solution

Mr S is an occupational therapist working in a local community rehabilitation service. One of his task is to assess clients seeking solutions for better independence in daily living, or for more sustainable assistance by their caregivers. The assessment often leads to recommending assistive devices that are appropriate to meet the clients' needs. Upon completing an assessment - which usually includes interviews, trials and clinical or environmental observation – Mr S achieves an idea of what kind of assistive devices would be most appropriate; now he needs to find out what products of that kind are available on the market, to show them to the client, to compare pros and cons of each product in order to restrict the range to the best suited solutions, to establish which of them can be provided through the National Health Service or through other service delivery schemes. By browsing the “assistive technology products” section of the EASTIN trans-European information network, Mr S finds out quickly the products available all over Europe. By jumping to the national system he finds out whether it is easy to purchase the selected products in that Country and whether they are eligible for public provision or financial contributions. In his “back office” activity, Mr S will regularly refresh his knowledge in the field, by browsing all recently entered products, and by studying the associated information. This “associated information” section will be useful also to extract scientific arguments when compiling the documentation to be attached as evidence to the medical prescription that Ms F – the physician responsible of the rehabilitation service – will issue to initiate the obtainment procedure for those devices that can be provided through the National Health service.

Scenario 3: a supplier wishing to improve the service provided to her firm's customers

Ms H is the owner of a well established enterprise providing assistive communication devices and special computer access interfaces for people with motor or language impairments in a given geographical area. Her staff is prepared to work directly with the clients in delivering, installing and carry out individual adaptations to match individual needs, in collaboration with the rehabilitation professional of the Local Health Authorities. In relation to the variety of specific needs of individual clients, her team needs to continuously browse what appears on the assistive technology market all over Europe, and find out the related supporting technical and clinical evidence. As the development of this kind of technologies is typically scattered throughout small specialized firms all over Europe, the trans-european network is the ideal tool to help find out the appropriate device in a timely and reliable fashion, to collect all the available scientific evidence about it, to identify the manufacturer and connect to it for appropriate deals, and eventually to be prepared to discuss and deliver the appropriate solution with the client and the rehab professional in view of providing state-of-the art and leading service.

OVERALL SERVICE AND SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

Description of the service

The Eastin network

The result of the EASTIN project is the ***EASTIN network*** – a new trans-European information service on Assistive Technologies. The EASTIN network aggregates the data provided by the Partners from their databases, and is accessible in all Partners' languages by means of the Internet. To this end, the six national information systems on assistive technology have been harmonised and improved in the course of the EASTIN project, according to agreed standards.

The key components of the EASTIN network are:

- The multilingual ***EASTIN website***, equipped with ***advanced search engines*** able to perform search and retrieval operations across all the partners' databases, in any of the partners' languages.
- ***Six improved national systems*** containing data on assistive technology products available on the European market, and other associated information. Such systems already existed before, but have been upgraded to comply with the common standards and procedures agreed upon by the EASTIN Consortium and thanks to the mutual exchange of know-how carried out within the EASTIN project.
- The ***EASTIN Association***, an organisation providing the suitable framework for continuing collaboration among the partners in the long run, in order to ensure the operation of the EASTIN website, to explore possible further developments, and also to proceed with further harmonisation activities and coordinate action related to data collection and maintenance.

In the following, the three components are described in more detail.

The EASTIN Website

The multilingual EASTIN website is composed of various sections:

- information about the **project**, including the possibility to look at or download documents of public interest;
- a restricted area for the partners, serving as **repository** of all internal documents such as mails exchanged or project deliverables
- the **search engine** across all Partners' databases, and
- a tool for manufacturers to **submit information** about new products that may be considered by the Partners for inclusion in their databases.



The search engine

Three different kinds of searches can be carried out across the six databases.

- Searching Assistive Technology products
- Searching Assistive Technology Companies
- Searching Associated Information.

Assistive Technology products can be found by means of five search criteria, used alone or in combination to each other. These are: Classification (ISO), Keyword, Commercial name, Manufacturer, Date of first entry. *Companies* can be found by means of their Company name. *Associated information* includes FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), Case Studies, Fact Sheets, Ideas and Links. These can be found by means of two search criteria, namely Classification (ISO) and Keyword.



One major feature of such process is the handling of multilingual information by means of advanced automatic translation tools. These have been customised to this specific domain of knowledge and use English as *lingua franca* between the various languages.

An example may clarify how multilingualism works in practice. A German-speaking user browses the website, searches for information and finds lists of results, whether products, companies or associated information. The dialogue with the website is fully in German language. When she or he wants to see the extended record of a product or whatever else document, this will appear in German language, with the exception of possible free text descriptions that were not produced originally in German (e.g. in Italian). Such free text will be displayed in English, along with an alert that it is a machine-translated text.



The products submission tool

The website also includes a on-line tool called “new product alert”. This tool offers to manufacturers the possibility to inform the EASTIN partners at a glance about the existence of products that are not yet in any of the six databases. Acceptance and processing of each submission is ruled by each partner's data

collection procedure and data quality control. The aim of the tool is to improve efficiency of the data collection process.

Usage logfiles

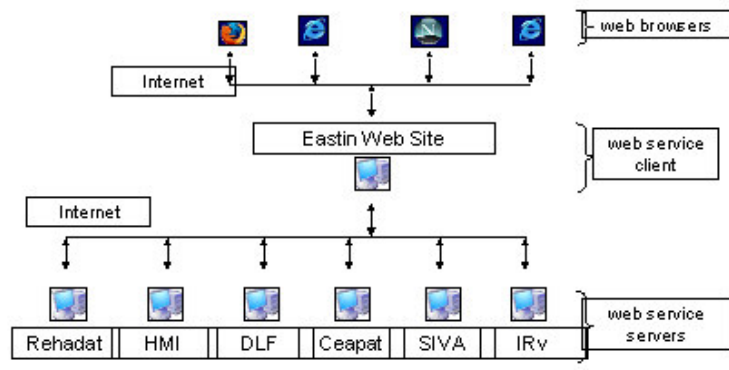
While the EASTIN website is used, this system collects anonymous data on various parameters that help understand – on a statistical basis – how many people make use of the network, how the network is used, and what searches or navigation strategies are most preferred by the audience.

Accessibility

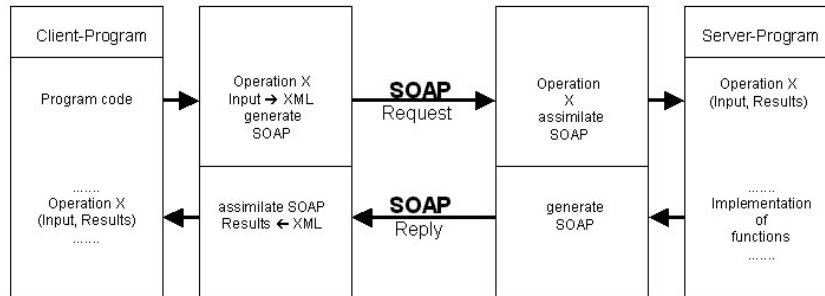
Accessibility of the Eastin Portal and of all its internal pages and tools is ensured according to W3C guidelines priority 1. Compliance has been successfully tested during the market validation exercises not only by submitting the various pages to the current state-of-the-art automatic validators, but also through extensive field testing with users with disabilities.

Technology used

The technological approach adopted by the EASTIN network is the one commonly known as *web services*. Web services are a technology purposely developed to exchange data among different web-based information system. This approach has the advantage of being independent on the platform and the programming languages used. This was an essential requirement while developing the network. Another advantage is that potential new partners can be easily integrated into the network.



The web service consists of a *web service client* and of a *web service server*. The web service client is embedded in the application www.eastin.info. The web service servers are made available by all EASTIN partners and provide all necessary functions. The web services are based on XML format. SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) is used as message protocol. SOAP determines the way a function call with XML data proceeds over computer platforms. With SOAP messages, web service operations are called up and operation results are returned.

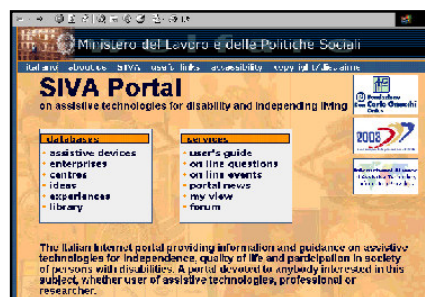


The interface description is carried out via WSDL (Web Service Description Language). This is an XML standard for the description of the functionality, parameters and return values of the operations and of the interchange formats of a web service's messages. The EASTIN web service client is able to read the WSDL in order to determine which functions are available on the server. All particular data types in use are integrated in XML format in the WSDL data file. Now the client can use SOAP in order to call up a function that is listed in WSDL.

The six national information systems, after improvement and harmonisation

The SIVA system – Italy

The SIVA system (www.portale.siva.it) is the Italian Portal on Assistive Technologies. It is run by **Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi Onlus** (the major Italian non-profit private provider of care and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities) on behalf of the Italian **Ministry of Welfare** (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali), under a specific contract that commits in the nation-wide provision free of charge of assistive technology information to all citizens. The SIVA system is accessible **free-of-charge** directly from the home page of the Ministry of Welfare, along with other public telematic services provided by the Ministry. The portal was launched on May 30, 2003. It includes a set of data bases and a set of services, as shown below.



Italian Ministry of Welfare - SIVA Portal on Assistive Technologies - Main components		
Databases	Services	Tools
Assistive Devices Enterprises Expert Centres Ideas Case Studies Library	Online Consultation with experts Guide to Assistive Technologies Seminars On Line News from the Portal Forum	Copyright/Disclaimers Accessibility Policy Useful Links Map of the Portal Search the Portal My opinion on the Portal

Contents (data refers to December 2005) includes 6393 assistive devices, 1272 enterprises, 275 centres, 684 ideas on how to solve daily life problems, 23 case studies and 181 library documents. An editorial team is taking care of developing and maintaining the contents. Answer to individual queries submitted through the “online consultation” is ensured by the Assistive Technology Information and Consultancy service of the Don Gnocchi Foundation. The Guide to AT currently includes over 200 topics and is expanding with the contribution of experts of various disciplines. The system is designed for bilingual consultation (Italian – English), although not all the material is currently available in English language. The user interface and the contents management system have been developed by Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi itself, based on ASP.NET and SQL technology.

Along with the SIVA Portal, the Don Gnocchi Foundation offers a network of 9 Assistive Technology Advice Centres, where users can resort to get individual assessment and counselling on the choice of assistive technology.

The REHADAT system - Germany

REHADAT (www.rehadat.de) is the German national information system supporting the vocational integration of people with disabilities. It was commissioned in 1988 by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. It is established at the **Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln** and is accessible **free-of-charge**. Detailed information about various aspects of vocational rehabilitation is available from eight databases designed for use by people with disabilities as well as professionals involved in rehabilitation. The topics of the eight databases are: Technical Aids, Case Studies, Literature, Research, Law, Addresses, Workshops and Seminars. Today (December 2005) more than



80,000 documents and 19,000 pictures are available on CD or via the Internet.

The most important component of the system is the Technical Aids database which can be searched in German and English. Documenting over 23,000 products, the database contains most of the technical aids for people with disabilities that are available in Germany. The range of technical aids covers aids for housekeeping, orthoses and prostheses, adapted machines and tools etc. Not only does it include entries detailing manufacturer, distributor and price, but it also provides technical descriptions and information on the reimbursement of costs by health insurance organisations. Contact details of manufacturers or distributors also contain the e-mail addresses and homepages of the companies as links that can be accessed directly from the database. Many documents are supplemented by illustrations. The technology used is based on open-source software.

Besides the information system, REHADAT offers courses on the use of the system, a hotline for technical and research questions and different kinds of software for the German labour market.

The HMI-BASEN system (Hjaelpemiddelbasen) – Denmark

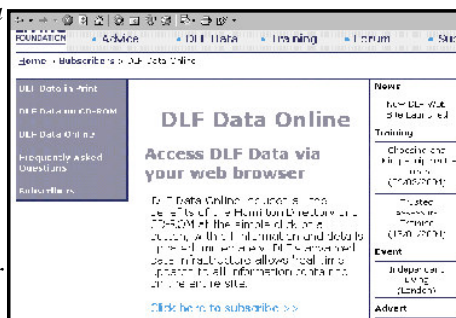
The Danish Centre for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education has run a national product-database with assistive devices since 1985. The product-database of today (www.hmi-basen.dk) has been available on the Internet since March 2000; it is accessible **free-of-charge** and is visited by more than 50.000 visitors each month, mainly professionals and users of AT. The database contains information on over 33.000 products where approx 17.000 products are still available on the Danish market. Furthermore, the database contains information on some 420 Danish suppliers of assistive technology. The language of the database is Danish. For all products in the database there is a set of technical data from which the product can be found. Hence, it is for example possible to find all manual wheelchairs that can carry a maximum weight of more than 140 kg in one search.



The database is developed in close cooperation with The Swedish Handicap Institute and The National Insurance Centre in Norway. Hence, the three countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden now run a joint database platform, however with different national product-data. The database system consists of two platforms. One platform is Borland Interbase version 6.01 from which data each night are replicated to the Internet-based platform, which is a SQL server.

The DLF-DATA system – Great Britain

The Disabled Living Foundation's database is called DLF Data and is the primary source of information in the UK for assistive technology. DLF Data (www.dlf.org.uk) is available on subscription in print, on CD-ROM and online with additional support from a Helpline. Subscribers include the National Health Service, Social Services and many other voluntary organisations and individuals. The organisation has run for over thirty five years as a non-profit charity, with support from the UK Government's Department of Health and other organisations and through the sales of its training, information and publications.



Contents include: over 14,000 AT products; over 1,300 product classifications including 23 top level, 240 secondary and 1,120 tertiary levels; 3,000 suppliers and manufacturers of AT products (current and

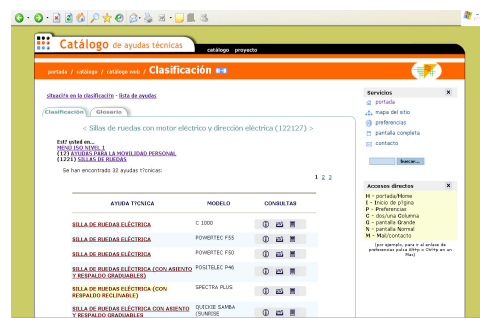
archive); 1,500 contact details for relevant organisations; 1,000 UK retailers of AT products; 44 factsheets; 38 tables of related products allowing rapid product comparisons; and internet links.

DLF's data is currently hosted on a Windows Relational Database System called Superbase. It is being maintained and updated daily in English by a team of up to six administrators and healthcare professionals, researching the AT market in the UK. The website is hosted on Linux servers and uses PHP and MySQL.

DLF Data – Main components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive database of Assistive Technology. A full description is given of each product, together with dimensions and options/accessories available. Suppliers and manufacturers of those products. Classifications including advice (products are classified into precise sections for ease of use, with background information on each section aiding the user further). Contact details of and information on organisations relevant to the field. Retailers of Assistive Technology. Factsheets. Tables of related products allowing for rapid product comparisons.

The CEAPAT system – Spain

The CEAPAT database (www.ceapat.org) on assistive technologies is run by IMSERSO (Institute for Migration and Social Affairs), an agency of the Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs. It was developed by the Technical University of Madrid and is accessible online on the web **free-of-charge** since 1999. It includes information on products, their technical characteristics and their manufacturers/suppliers. It is fully compliant with the AAA level of the W3C/WAI Guidelines.



The contents include over 3000 assistive devices and 1000 enterprises. A team within Ceapat takes care of keeping the contents updated. The Technical University of Madrid takes care of the technical maintenance: accessibility, software, innovation, usability, new developments etc. Orange Software S.L. provides the web hosting facilities. In 2002 the database received the annual award from SIDAR (the Spanish Organisation that promotes Web Accessibility). The main components of the database are shown in the table below.

CEAPAT's Database on Assistive Technologies		
Databases	Services	Tools
Assistive devices	Online consultation	Accessibility policy
Enterprises	Reports	Map of the site
Manufacturers	User configuration	Fuzzy search facilities
Pictures and illustrations		

The Hulpmiddelen Wijzer System – The Netherlands

The Hulpmiddelen Wijzer (www.hulpmiddelenwijzer.nl) is a nation wide information system for all actors in the field of AT and Service Delivery. The system was developed and exploited by iRv, the Institute for Rehabilitation Research, in co-operation with a national organization for information on the distribution issues. The system in its current appearance exists since June 2001, and is the upgrade of a system that existed off line for about 15 year. It is accessible **upon subscription**. The search interface allows to search on Assistive Technology Products, User problems, Manufacturer / suppliers, Legislation and



Literature. The system also provides a virtual showroom with visualization of the AT in the system. Currently, the content of the system includes 12000 devices, 1500 Companies, 500 literature documents, 500 problems described against their solutions, and 15 legislation documents.

The EASTIN Association

The EASTIN Association is a non-profit Body whose founding members are the 6 Organisations who were partners in the EASTIN project. The main mission is to ensure the operation of the EASTIN network in the long run, and to provide a suitable framework for long term collaboration in the field of Assistive Technology information. The Association is incorporated in Italy, and is open – subject to decision of the Assembly of the Partners – to future inclusion of possible new Members from other Countries that share similar and complementary objectives.

Whereas the production of information is managed by each Partner with national resources and within the framework of each Partner's business plan, the operation of the EASTIN website is managed by the Association through contract with a Service Provider (Don Gnocchi Sistemi srl, based in Italy) who ensures the technical support and the basic administration services.

All partners contribute to the funding of the Association's activities by means of an annual fee, by sharing the costs on project-basis, and by contributing in kind. For instance, Fondazione Don Gnocchi Onlus offers the *web-hosting* service for free; each partner will bear the travel & subsistence expenses related to *meetings* or *working groups*; common *communication / marketing activities* will be organised in relation to events and the funding shared case by case. For this purpose each Partner earmarked a budget line for international collaboration in its business plan.

Users and customers

The three main targets of the Eastin network

The main target groups of the services delivered by the EASTIN network are:

- *End users* of AT products, such as people with disabilities, their families and primary carers
- *Professionals* working in the rehabilitation domain, or involved at any level in the AT policy or in AT service delivery systems
- *Industrialists*, such as manufacturers and suppliers of AT products

Each target group needs different pieces of information depending on the specific circumstance it is confronted with AT. For instance, end-users may need different information when they want to develop a clearer idea on whether a problem can be solved (demand development), or when they want to actually choose and buy a device. In the following chapters, the perspectives of the each group is briefly discussed.

The End-users' perspective

The provision of an AT information service plays an important role in the empowerment of end-users. The aging trend of the population – in the years to come – will lead to an increased prevalence of people with disabilities. It is estimated that the number of people with a disability will increase from the current 11% to 17% of the population in EU countries in 2020. AT products play an increasingly important role in several countries' national policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and fulfilment of rights for citizens with disabilities.

The tendency today is that people take more and more care of themselves if they become disabled. Years ago, most people tended to wait for “the system” taking initiative and thus to be dependent on “the system” to help them deal with the situation. Today people tend to be more assertive towards “the system” (*awareness of one's own rights*) but also to look for solutions themselves (*willingness to take control over one's own life*).

Traditionally, citizens have been dependent on professional help to find solutions, also because information services directly aimed at end-users did not exist. Today it is necessary to aim the existing information systems more directly to end-users. This will make end-users able to retrieve relevant information on AT products on their own and eventually to seek advice from professionals.

As a consequence of this growth in the end-user target group, of this trends in national policies, of this evolution of the end-users' expectations, the need has increased for end-users to access more and more AT information on a European scale.

End-users may need information because of changes in their functional status: they may have become disabled due to an unexpected event, or their disability may have increased or decreased. Because of the changed situation a need arises to search for solutions able to handle this changed situation. An AT product can be one of the solutions and an orientation on the AT market will be necessary to find an appropriate product for the changed situation.

Information may be needed at various stages: to help clarify the nature of one's own need by comparison with what problems can be solved (*demand development*), when wondering which type of solution is most appropriate (*orientation*), when *comparing* different products available on the market for the solution considered, when *selecting* the product, when deciding to *buy* it, when *paying* it or seeking financial support according to local legislation, and eventually when *using* it.

The EASTIN search engine will be able to offer a great added value to end-users in relation to the *first three stages*. This is because end-users will be able to take advantage of the whole range of information available in Europe when finding out whether solutions exist (*demand development*), being orientated towards an appropriate solution (*orientation*), and comparing the available options for implementing such solution (*comparing*).

Conversely, the other steps in the user's information process (*Selecting, Buying, Paying, Using*) are more related to the national context and thus find more proper solution in the national information systems.

Users' interests in information systems

- The number of citizens with disabilities will increase as the population is aging
- The policy trend is to ensure equal opportunities and fulfilment of rights for citizens with disabilities
- Citizens with disabilities wish to look on their own for assistive solutions across a wider range of options

Added value of Eastin Vs National information systems

- The ability to search across all information system will greatly expand the opportunities for users at least at three levels: *demand development, orientation, and comparing AT products*.

The professionals' perspective

As part of their work, professionals must know the market of AT products, master AT knowledge and be familiar with the relevant legislation. They are involved in advising end-users and supplying them with products according to their requirements and to national legislation.

In the years to come professionals will more and more meet people with disabilities who are well informed about the AT products they require. Therefore they expect the information system should be able to generate, efficiently and precisely, the exact type of information required when discussing with the client, in order to be able to complement and add value to the knowledge the end-user already has. Through the EASTIN portal, a professional can look further at a field to get new ideas on equipment and learn about best practice, so as to provide his/her client with the best possible advice.

Within the rehabilitation process and the service delivery system procedures, there are several stages in which end-users may ask professionals for support in their search for an AT product. Such support may range from developing awareness and knowledge (*informing* and *educating* the end-user about AT products and associated issues) to helping choose the product (*advising* the end-user, and/or the funding authority, in which case the advice may become a *prescription*), to ensuring correct implementation of the solution (*training* on how to use an AT device).

The EASTIN network will be able to offer a great added value to professionals in relation to the first two steps of the user process. This is because they will be able to take advantage of the whole range of information available at European when developing their own – and their clients' – awareness and knowledge in the AT domain. Conversely, the other steps in the professional's information process (*Advising* and *Training*) are more related to the national context and thus find more proper solution in the national systems.

Professionals' interest in information systems

- Future users will be very well informed about their disability and needs, so professionals must have the same amount of information at their disposal
- Professionals can look further in the field to get new ideas on equipment and best practice in order to provide the best possible advice to their clients
- There is a need for need timely, up-to date, relevant information

Added value of Eastin Vs National information systems

- The ability to search across all information system will greatly expand the opportunities for professionals at least at two levels: *informing* and *educating* on AT.

The Industrialists' perspective

The industrial target chiefly includes two actors: *suppliers* and *manufacturers* of AT devices. The first reason why they are an essential target for the EASTIN network is that they are the main information sources about AT products. In fact, in order the product information be accessible through EASTIN, it must be recorded at least in one Partners' national information system, and this happens because each Partner has a data collection procedure where the Company is contacted and this provides the data to be entered in the system, or – as it currently happens for the *SIVA Portal* and *HMI-Basen* – directly enters the data through purposely developed online tools. The fact that each national system is integrated within the EASTIN network gives the Companies additional motivation to provide their data, first because of the increased international visibility through the EASTIN, secondly because the harmonisation of the various databases has eased the updating process.

However, there are also other reasons for interest by manufacturers or suppliers. Nowadays, many suppliers are extending their horizons in view of providing a more comprehensive service, so as to meet the requirements of customers – either end-users or professionals – that are more informed and demanding than in the past. They need more and better information about other national marketplaces in European countries. They want their products be visible to end-users or professionals who are seeking information in this field. They wish to influence the potential customers and try to sell them their products.

Manufacturers are responsible for the development of appropriate AT products, and for introducing them on the market. The product is then usually delivered to the end-user by a *network of suppliers* at various levels. For this reason they need information on the user needs, on what the other manufacturers in the AT field are doing, on suppliers that may be able to deliver the product to the user. Manufacturer also need to ensure maintenance of the product, which means to repair and make personal adaptations wherever possible. Therefore a manufacturer may need information when carrying out market analyses related to *developing* and *producing* devices, and when taking decisions related to *supplying* and *maintaining* the products.

Likewise, a supplier may need information at various stages: when considering what kind of products to deal in (*product orientation*), when *buying* products, when *informing* customers about possible solutions to their needs, when *selling*, *delivering* and organising *after sale services*.

The EASTIN network will be able to offer a great added value to *suppliers* in relation to the first three steps of the user process, and to *manufacturers* in relation to the first two steps. This is because suppliers will be able to take advantage of the whole range of information available at European when deciding what products to deal in (*product orientation*), when finding where to buy them (*buying*) and assist their customers in taking decisions (*informing*); likewise, manufacturers will be able to rely on a complete picture of the AT market and on a comprehensive repository of AT knowledge when *developing* and *producing* AT devices.

Conversely, the other steps in the industry's information process (for suppliers: Selling, Delivering and After sale servicing; for manufacturers: supplying and maintaining) may need more information related to the specific national context (in which case the national systems may be useful to some extent) or to issues that are even beyond the scope of the national systems (e.g. market statistics, etc...).

Industry' s interest in information systems

- Suppliers are extending their horizons and need more and better information about other national marketplaces in Europe
- They want to be visible to professionals and users who are seeking information about a certain AT product
- They want to be highly visible in all information systems.

Added value of Eastin Vs National information systems

- The ability to search across all databases will greatly expand the opportunities for suppliers at the levels of *product orientation*, *buying*, *informing*, and for manufacturers at the levels of *developing* and *producing*).

Overall benefits

The EASTIN project will not generate a business in traditional sense, in that each national system is based on its own stable funding scheme – mainly governmental or subscription-based – that will be not substantially influenced by EASTIN. The **benefits** generated by the EASTIN network are related to the added value of the network Vs the national system, and are both *external* (for the audience) and *internal* (for the partners). Some of them can be considered as *direct*, some other as *indirect*.

The following table provides a quick overview of benefits.

<i>Summary of benefits</i>		
	<i>External (for the audience)</i>	<i>Internal (for the partners)</i>
Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the whole amount of AT core information (products and suppliers) and associated information (fact sheets, case studies, FAQs, ideas, links) across all six information systems, in the user's language or English, and according to a standard format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of best practice, information sources, expertise Increase quality of contents and efficiency of the data flow process Optimised use of resources spent in data collection/maintenance
Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to improved national information system Increased transparency of the assistive technology market in Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforced review and development of partners' internal expertise and systems Better relationships with other organisations doing the same work throughout Europe Exposure to innovative/different ideas and thinking about provision of services Stronger position in front of national funding sources

On the *external side*, all users are able to access the whole amount of AT information available in Europe through the EASTIN website – in their language and according to a common format. They also get better information from their national systems, due to the improvements that have taken place within the project.

On the *internal side*, the partners have increased the overall quality of the information provided. They have been able to optimise the use of their resources by exchanging information, sharing best practice and expertise, and pursuing more efficient method in running their information systems. This will also attract increased relationships with other organisations doing similar work throughout Europe. Two such organisations - Hacavie in France (with its national information system **Handicat**), and Vlaams Fond in Belgium (with its Flemish information system **KOC**) – have already expressed their interest in joining the network and carry out the investment needed to adapt their system to the Eastin standard.

A better service for the audience has meant also a *stronger position in front of each partner's national funding sources*. For instance, one of the argument for the Italian Ministry of Welfare to renew the financial support to the SIVA Portal for 2006 onwards was the European dimensions the Portal is going to offer through Eastin; in the UK, the Eastin argument allowed DLF to start negotiation with national sponsors to move from a subscription-fee scheme to a public core funding, in order to make information available for free.

Finally, the expected impact of the EASTIN network on the EU society deserves to be mentioned. This can be described in terms of:

- contributing to the empowerment of citizens with disability in relation to the knowledge and the choice of assistive technologies that can improve their independence, quality of life, integration at school and at work, and participation in society
- contributing to the advancement of the AT market, that will need to respond to a wider audience of informed, demanding and responsible consumers across the whole Europe

- contributing the advancement of R&D in the field, as the network will provide a powerful observatory of the existing products, and the expertise (studies, tests, use experiences etc) developed around them
- helping improve the national / regional public service delivery systems, by making transparent across Europe the variety of regulations, standards and procedures adopted and thus bringing to light best practices that can be up taken and localised

MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Project history in brief

The starting point of the project was a comparative analysis of the six national information systems participating in the EASTIN project. The systems were described according to a common template. By benchmarking them against five indicators (*availability, accessibility, affordability, awareness, appropriateness*), the analysis identified strengths and weaknesses of each systems, as well as the so-called *winning features*, i.e. good characteristics the EASTIN Consortium thought as worth to be exploited in all systems and in the future network as a whole.

The findings of this analysis revealed that the following major issues should be addressed in order to exploit such *winning features* in the international perspective:

- **Contents**
what contents areas are worth to be harmonized in relation to national Vs international interest
- **Terminology/classification**
how far the different terminology and the classifications used by the various systems need to be harmonized or even standardized
- **Navigation strategies**
what search / navigation functions are useful and relevant in the international environment for the various users groups
- **Navigation technology**
what is the most effective, sustainable and flexible technological approach for integrating the network and allow for cross-databases searches
- **Multilingual interpretation**
how far the language issue can be solved by means of software procedures and automated translation technologies
- **Accessibility/usability**
how to ensure that the network is perceived as user-friendly, and complies to best-practice accessibility requirements.
- **Data flow organization**
how far the partners can collaborate to improve the quality, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the data collection and maintenance process.

Deliverable 2.1 “Comparative analysis of the existing system” (a public document) contains the detailed description of the six systems and the finding of this comparative analysis

While this analysis was being carried out, a first release of the EASTIN website was designed, agreed upon and published. It included

- the quick links to the national systems
- a presentation of the project
- a documents download area
- a restricted section for partners serving as repository of all mails exchanged among the partners, documents in progress, and official documents internal to the project.

This last section worked in this way. Any mails sent by any partner to the project list servers was not only sent to all partners, but also processed by the website engine in such a way to separate the attachment from the message, assign an univocal prefix to its filename (in such a way to avoid overwriting possible documents with the same name) and put it in the “documents in progress” repository. Owing to this technique every message or document exchanged during the project could be easily retrieved and sorted.

All sections of the Eastin website fully works in the six partners' languages, including a purposely designed contents management system that allows each partner to update independently its national-language section in such a way to ensure full accessibility. This part of the website – with further refinements carried out later – are still working in the final version and will be used by the partners for maintenance of the editorial sections and for all future communication internal to the Eastin Association.

Deliverable 8.1 “Eastin website – first release” describes the first version of the EASTIN website and its contents management system. An additional document “**Internal communication rules**” was compiled to establish the rule each partner should comply to for effective communication within the project.

At this point the production of a first version “**Deliverable 8.5 “brochure of the project”**” was anticipated to start awareness dissemination on the Eastin project

Armed with the findings of the comparative analysis, worked started towards defining the design specifications of the EASTIN trans-national network. Through an iterative process, a set of **requirements** (goals to be achieved) and **specifications** (technical actions needed to fulfil such requirements) was gradually developed allow the EASTIN network to perform as **harmonized** and **integrated**.

Harmonized means that all information systems belonging to the network::

- Cover the same domain of knowledge (*consistency of scope*)
- Allow for unambiguous *recognisability of items*
- Allow for unambiguous interpretation of the data delivered (*consistency of knowledge*)

while **integrated** means that the whole network:

- Offers a *unique entry point*
- Allows for *cross-databases searches*, and
- Is managed through a *coordinated data collection process*.

This deliverable provided detailed instruction for:

- adaptations to be carried out in the six national information systems (harmonization)
- tools and search engines to be implemented in the EASTIN website (integration)
- a roadmap for maintaining and improving the network in the long run, especially in relation to data flow processes, terminology/classification evolution and multilingual interpretation issues.

Finally, the deliverable addressed the issue of **automatic translation** by 1) defining a methodology for the implementation of automatic translation techniques to the partners' databases contents, and 2) performing a comparative analysis of the software products available on the market for this purpose.

Deliverable 3.1 “Harmonisation and Integration Requirements and Specifications” describes the agreed standards and the instructions for harmonisation and integration of the EASTIN network. It is the document that provides the technical fundamentals and depicts the roadmap of the EASTIN network.

In parallel to this technical work, dissemination activities started accorded to an agreed dissemination plan.

Deliverable 8.2 “Dissemination Plan” describes the dissemination activities planned individually by each partner and by the Consortium as a whole. A revised version of this deliverable was also produced later in response to the recommendations of the Annual Project Review.

A National Workshop, held in each partner's Country, was a major component of the dissemination strategy. The overall audience of the workshops was 175 persons. The date and the specific target audience was chosen by each partner according to the national context:

- United Kingdom: London, September 15, 2004
- Denmark: Copenhagen, September 21, 2004

- Germany: Cologne, September 28, 2004
- Italy: Milano, September 27-28, 2004
- The Netherlands: Hoensbroek, October 15, 2004
- Spain: Madrid, December 13, 2004

Deliverable 8.3 ‘Proceedings of the National Workshops’ provides retrospective information on the 6 national workshops.

In this period, preliminary discussion took place within the Consortium – also resorting to external legal advice – about the project deployment after the conclusion of the Eastin project. This led to the definition of a Draft Business Plan.

Deliverable 8.4 ‘Draft Business Plan’ provides the first outline of the deployment strategy of the EASTIN network. A revised version of this deliverable was also produced later in response to the recommendations of the Annual Project Review.

Based on the definitions and the instructions contained in *Deliverable 3.1 ‘Harmonisation and Integration Requirements and Specifications’*, every partner started working at implementing the harmonisation specification in their national system. The work involved ten major tasks:

1. All systems adjusted their classification methods to the same agreed standard ISO 9999:2002.
2. All partners revised their thesaurus of keywords (category descriptors) in their national language in such a way to have them linked to ISO 9999 3rd level codes..
3. All partners who were able to produce documents falling under the heading ‘associated information’ (FAQs, Fact Sheets, Case Studies, Ideas and Links) re-classified them according to the ISO 9999:2002 standard.
3. All partners adjusted their data collection procedure in order to always identify the manufacturer of each product.
4. All systems adopted an internal identification number to univocally identify a product.
5. All systems adopted similar rules for compiling the free-text descriptions of AT products.
6. All partners arranged to have for each product a picture consistent with an agreed standard (JPG fitting a 222x150 pixel rectangle)
7. All partners arranged to make available the first entry date and the last update date for each product record.
8. All systems adopted the same rules for describing companies.
9. All systems adopted the same rules for describing links
10. Based on the recommendations contained in *deliverable 3.1*, all partners selected a suitable commercial professional translation software to/from English, customised it to this domain of knowledge, and created automatic procedures for translating the free-text part of their documents.

Concerning this last point, most of the systems are now also able to exhibit their free-text information in English by means of their automatic translator. The problem is still to be solved for the couple Danish-English, as no automatic translation software was found on the market so far that is able to produce satisfactory results in this area. However, it is expected a suitable product be available in the near future.

The integration specifications were implemented within the EASTIN website through the creation of the multilingual search engine able to perform cross-databases searches across all Partner’s databases. This activity was a major piece of work within the project.

In addition to the search engine, a tool was implemented on the EASTIN website that allows companies to inform any of the EASTIN partners about new products. This facility – called *new products alert* – is a first effective step towards a co-ordinated data collections, an objective that could not be fully achieved within the short timetable of the project and will be further pursued within the Eastin association.

When the network reached the stage of a fully working prototype, the last stage of validation started and proceeded for four months. The EASTIN website went live for the public at the beginning of October. Based on the findings of the validation, the EASTIN website was refined until reaching the final release.

Deliverable 4.1 and Deliverable 4.2 are respectively the first working prototype and the final official release of the EASTIN network. A paper document “***Technical description of the EASTIN network***” was issued along with Deliverable 4.2 providing details of how the EASTIN network works

Deliverable 8.7: ‘Eastin website – final version’ is the final release of the Website that embodies the Eastin engines and tools plus all relevant documentation, both public and restricted

The EASTIN network was officially launched in five Final International Workshops, that took place in dates and venues suitable to each Country.

- Italy: ***Milano, at Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi on November 4, 2005.***
- United Kingdom: ***London, at the House of Parliament (Portcullis House) on October 24, 2005***
- Germany: ***Düsseldorf, at the Rehacare International Fair on October 14, 2005***
- Denmark: ***Copenhagen, at the Danish Technological Institute on October 26, 2005***
- The Netherlands: ***virtual workshop through the Internet (November 28 – December 12, 2005)***

Another important International Workshop was the pre-launch of the EASTIN network to the scientific community, held in ***Lille (France) on September 8, 2005*** as a plenary Session of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE).

The overall audience who participated directly was around 500 persons. The Italian workshop was also ***broadcast live through the Internet*** (820 accesses reported) and was ***attended in videoconference*** from other nine seats throughout Italy. The Dutch workshop consisted of ***temporary Internet Forum*** moderated by IRV where participants learned about Eastin, discussed and exchanged views over a period of time. An overview of the impact of these launch events is provided at the end of Appendix ‘Dissemination Activities’.

Deliverable 8.5: ‘Eastin brochure’ is the official information brochure of the project, in English language. Some partner produced a national language version on their own initiative

Deliverable 8.6: ‘Proceedings of the Final International Workshops’ offers a retrospective descriptions of the 6 final workshops held in the various Countries

The last stage of the project was devoted to:

- finalising the agreements for the deployment of the EASTIN network
- preparing the related legal instruments (Constitution of the EASTIN Association, license agreements, disclaimers, IPR contracts etc...), and
- to compile all administrative documents due to the Commission for the project closure (Monitoring Reports, Final Report, Financial Statements).

Deliverable 8.8: ‘Final Business Plan and Market Deployment plan’ contains the roadmap for the deployment of the Eastin network and for all future developments.

Market validation: methodology, experiences and conclusions

Ten research questions were identified for the market validation activities:

- *Question 1: What are the weaknesses and the strengths of the six systems?*
- *Question 2: To what extent do the six systems deserve to be harmonised and integrated into a trans-European network ?*
- *Question 3: What is the added value of the trans-European network Vs the national systems?*
- *Question 4: Does the EASTIN network work and perform adequately?*
- *Question 5: How will the EASTIN network be used by its potential market?*
- *Question 6: Will the EASTIN network meet the potential markets expectations?*
- *Question 7: How will the EASTIN network be maintained and updated?*
- *Question 8: Will the EASTIN network be financially sustainable?*
- *Question 9: Will the national systems be financially sustainable?*
- *Question 10: Will the EASTIN network be organisationally sustainable?*

The validation activities were carried out through **external** assessment by a sample population representing the three major target groups of the EASTIN network (**end-users**, **professionals** and **industrialists**), and through **internal** self-assessment by the partners themselves.

For each target, a *core group* and an *extended group* of **external** validators were recruited in each Country. Each **core group** was composed of a small number of selected representatives who were given specific training, and interacted directly with the Partners' project teams in all stages of the validation. Conversely, each **extended group** was composed of a larger number of people who had candidated as validators; these people were given no training, and interacted with the project team only online at the time of the validation exercises. The extended groups included both expert and novice Internet users so as to represent a meaningful sample of the "usual" population that will be confronted with the system. Overall, the number of validators accounted to 654.

External validators	Core groups	Extended groups
End users	n. 60 (10 / Country)	n. 300 (50 / Country)
Professionals	n. 30 (5 / Country)	n. 180 (30 / Country)
Industrialists	n. 24 (4 / Country)	n. 60 (10 / Country)

As the network developed gradually in the course of the project, the market validation activities were carried out in three rounds.

1st validation stage

This stage (June 2004) addressed Question 1 (***What are the weaknesses and the strengths of the six systems?***). Three core groups in each Country (end users, professionals, industrialists) were recruited and trained on the use of the national information system of their Country. Then they were asked to validate the analysis of the national systems compiled by the Eastin partners. The validation was based upon five indicators, labelled as "the five As": *accessibility, availability, awareness, appropriateness* and *affordability*.

The validation methodology was based on the Delphi method. A set of statements was prepared to summarise the main findings of the analysis as self-assessed by the Partners. The statements were translated into all Partners' languages and embodied in a on-line questionnaire to be filled-in via the Internet. Each member of the core groups had to express his or her agreement / disagreement on each statement, and provide motivations. Once a questionnaire had been filled-in, the member's opinions were disclosed to all other members of the same core group in the same Country. After reading the other members' opinions, each member could reformulate his or her view. Two iterations were sufficient to get a stable opinion and draw

conclusions. The statements were the same for all core groups, although the administration method was different. The Delphi method showed very efficient for this purpose; what's more, having the questionnaire online allowed to recruit the validators from all over each Country without requiring them to travel, which was especially appreciated from those members who had a disability.

Details on the method and on the findings are reported in:

Deliverable D5.1 'Results of the end -users validation of the existing systems'

Deliverable D6.1 'Results of the professionals validation of the existing systems'

Deliverable D7.1 'Results of the AT suppliers validation of the existing systems'

The result of this validation stage was a thorough understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of each national system. The assumptions initially formulated by the Consortium in the first draft of Deliverable 2.1 ***'Comparative analysis of the existing system s'*** were revised on the basis of the opinions expressed by the validation panels, and a final version of the deliverable was produced.

2nd validation stage

This stage (December 2004) addressed Questions 2 and 3 (***To what extent do the six systems deserve to be harmonised and integrated into a trans-European network ? and What is the added value of the trans-European network Vs the national systems?***).

To this end, the same core groups were requested to validate a set of harmonisation and integration requirements as proposed by the Eastin partners. The validation was based upon a *mock-up*, which simulated through an animated slides-show how the future EASTIN website would work as network integrator. Again, the methodology was based on the Delhi method administered through a on-line questionnaire.

Details on the method and on the findings are reported in:

Deliverable D5.2 'Results of the end -users validation of harmonisation / integration requirements'

Deliverable D6.2 'Results of the professionals validation of harmonisation / integration requirements'

Deliverable D7.2 'Results of the AT suppliers validation of harmonisation / integration requirements'

The findings of this validation stage helped finalise the ***"Harmonisation and Integration Requirements and Specification"*** (Deliverable 3.1), which in turn allowed to start the technical implementation activities.

3rd validation stage

This stage (May - September 2005) focused on the ***EASTIN network as a whole*** and answered ***all the other questions***. This time, both the ***core*** and the ***extended*** groups were involved as external validators. While the core groups were the same of the 1st and 2nd stage, the recruitment of the extended group was carried out by means of a self candidacy online form. Each candidate had to state in what group he or she best recognised him/herself (end-user, professional, or industrialist), to provide some personal data and to subscribe a privacy protection statement according to national legislation; if accepted in the group, he or she was provided a username and a password to access the Eastin network prototype.

During the four months validation period, the "navigation behaviour" within the Eastin network was monitored by means of ***log-files***; at certain times, on-line questionnaires were administered to collect the validators' opinions; at the end, a number of face-to-face or telephonic interviews were also carried out to complete data collection.

The findings were analysed according to five dimensions:

- technical sustainability
- usage sustainability
- search engine sustainability

- national systems sustainability
- Eastin Association sustainability

*Details on the methods and on the findings of the third validation stage are reported in:
Combined Deliverable D5.3 / D6.3 / D7.3 “Validation results of the trans national network”*

In brief, the findings of this validation stage provided the ground for:

1. re-designing the Eastin website and its search facilities, in order to better meet the audience's expectations and motivations
2. taking decisions on the deployment strategy, including the organisational / financial model for the sustainability of the network
3. finding out what contents areas deserve priority investments in data collection, in order to better meet the audience's interest
4. addressing awareness and advertisement efforts in the deployment stage.

The first point (***re-designing the Eastin website***) was fully addressed within the project timeframe. A new release of the Eastin website – fixing mainly technical bugs and lacks of performance – was published one month after the start of the validation period, in such a way that validators could proceed with focusing on usage instead than technical issues. A final release – including a complete re-design of the search interface that made the website more user-friendly, performing and accessible – was published at the end of the projects on the ground of the usage sustainability validation results.

The second point (***taking decisions on the deployment strategy***) was also fully addressed within the project timeframe. The Consortium was able to take decisions on the organisational structure (the EASTIN Association) for the deployment, the maintenance and possible further developments of the Eastin network. All legal instruments related to the setting up of the EASTIN Association were produced, and business plans for the sustainability of the national systems – and of the network as a whole – were defined. The actual incorporation of the EASTIN Association as a legal entity is foreseen in Spring 2006, after the related bureaucratic process is concluded.

The third point (***contents areas deserving priority investment***) was addressed at the level of collecting the validator's views and organising them in such a way to shed light on the audience's expectations in terms of contents. As the Eastin website is not a database in itself but rather an integrator of national databases, tuning the contents to the audience's expectations means taking such expectations into account in each Partner's data collection process. This will gradually produce the expected results in the long run, mainly after one year after the conclusion of the project.

The validation findings on usage sustainability are very rich in relation to this issue. While they show an overall positive trend in relation to the usefulness of the information service provided, they also contain constructive criticism that helps identify weaknesses to be addressed. They offer insight on issues such as the reasons why the audience searches for information, the perceived added value of the network Vs the single national systems, the contents areas that are most required or where improvements would be welcome. All these elements represent a “treasure” for the EASTIN Association to indicate the roadmap for continuous improvement.

The fourth point (***addressing awareness and advertisement efforts***) is somewhat linked to the previous point: many expectations arisen from the audience appeared clearly related to the communication efforts the EASTIN association will carry out in the deployment stage. For instance, the motivation to search given pieces of information, or the perceived added value of the Eastin network Vs the national systems, appeared not fully exploited now because the audience – as various validators pointed out – is not widely informed of the existence of these information systems and is not fully aware of their potential in solving personal problems or in assisting their professional activities. Based on the experience of the dissemination activities carried out within the project and the validator's views in the usage sustainability validation, a awareness /

advertisement plan was devised, initially for the year 2006. The EASTIN Association's plan is to revise it every year on the ground of the progress observed.

In the following, some more details are given on the methodology and the findings of this validation stage.

Concerning **technical sustainability**, the first prototype of the network (published on May 15, 2005) was validated according to three indicators: *performance*, *accessibility* and *usability*. Based on the findings, the network and especially its user interface (the Eastin website) were improved and fine-tuned to a level that can be considered satisfactory in relation to the needs and the expectations of the audience. In its final version (published on November 25, 2005), the Eastin search interface was completely re-designed taking into account all the findings of both the technical and the usage sustainability validation

Major critical issues	Main actions undertaken
Lack of performance in some searches	Fixed, by refining the webservices (both on the client and on the server side) and establishing a maximum response time (20 secs) for the partners that are temporarily down
No full compliance with W3C priority 1 guidelines due to javascript technology in some points	Re-design of the Eastin search interface in such a way to avoid the need for any java scripts
Some search procedures perceived as complex / cumbersome	Improve elements (eg. Buttons, explanations, ect) detected as lacking usability and identify specifications; Re-design of the Eastin search interface by separating "basic searches" from "advanced searches"

Concerning **usage sustainability**, the validation exercise consisted of *monitoring the daily usage* of a sample population for almost four months, processing the monitoring data in order to know the *navigation habits* of the various user groups, and collecting the users' opinions by means of *online questionnaires* and *structured interviews*. This exercise provided a deep insight of the motivations for the various user groups to access and use the Eastin network, of the kind of information they expect to find, of the overall willingness to use it.

The various target groups (end-users, professionals, industrialists) exhibited different behaviours in their "navigation patterns" and expressed different views with respect to the various questions asked. Overall, the users' perception of the Eastin network showed very positive. Some users expressed constructive criticism that helped identify aspects to be improved to better meet the users' expectations. Noteworthy is to observe that critical remarks came mostly from end users of some Countries (especially the UK, followed by NL and DK) while validators from other Countries exhibited – in the average – more positive attitude. This seems due to the fact that in those three Countries the recruitment was carried out mainly through established users organisations that are particularly committed in ensuring best quality services – not just "good services" – to citizens with disabilities; so they were more keen on recommending improvements than on just congratulating for the service.

Major issues	Main actions undertaken
Some search methods are more often preferred by the audience (e.g. keywords) than others	Re-design the user interface in such a way to have the preferred search method in the forefront (done within the project timeframe); proceed with improvement and harmonisation of the keyword systems, possibly mapped as a fourth-level to Iso 9999 (take up in the action plan of the EASTIN Association)
A significant sample of the audience think they will use the network quite seldom. What's more, although most validators considered the EASTIN information useful, there is a minority of them still doubtful	Advertisement / communication efforts in 2006 to increase the audience's awareness of the benefits of using the information offered by the EASTIN network.
The reason why the audience searches in the network mainly corresponds to the "added value" previously identified by the EASTIN consortium.	The messages delivered by the advertisement / communication campaigns in the coming years will exploit both the intrinsic value of the national systems and the added value of the Eastin network

The highest audience's interest is on AT products and on fact sheets. Some interest in the other "associated information" documents exists only in the Countries where such information already existed in the national database.	Data collection priority will be definitely given to AT products and fact sheets. However, some advertisement effort will be placed also on other "associated information" documents, as it seems that the missing interest may be due to unawareness.
The audience would like to see improvements in some contents areas (AT products, Fact sheets, Case Studies, Ideas)	A plan for contents improvements in this areas will be discussed and decided within the Eastin association. The interviews findings on this issue will be carefully analysed and weighted against possible constraints in order to devise sustainable improvements (e.g.: the price of AT products is a piece of information many users would like most, however in most cases – due to the imperfect structure of the AT market – the price makes sense only within a specific national context. This is the reason why the EASTIN consortium preferred to consider price as an information of national interest)

Concerning the sustainability of the *search engine*, an effective solution was found by the Partners themselves. The search engine is designed in such a way that it can work even in case one or more partners' national information system is temporarily down: in such case, after a certain waiting time (20 secs) the user will be alerted of the missing database but will anyway get the results from the other databases. The system is also designed to be flexible in such a way that at any time other new partners may plug-in (provided the EASTIN Association decides so) or existing partners may unplug (in the unfortunate circumstance their databases are terminated), without endangering the overall network functioning. For the technical maintenance of the website, an appropriate IT service provider was identified (Don Gnocchi Sistemi srl, based in Italy) to be contracted by the EASTIN Association on a yearly basis. However, there will be no technical problem to if the Association – in the future – will decide for another provider.

Concerning the *economic sustainability* of the network, it turned out that this does not depend on the search engine – whose operation requires little investment in itself – but on the sustainability of the *national systems*: these contain the data accessed through the Eastin engine, and avail the resources for sharing the maintenance of the Eastin engine. To this end, each partner developed business plans related to their funding sources, according to a common method that allows to get an overall picture of the financial sustainability of the network.

Finally, concerning the *sustainability of the EASTIN association*, a process of agreement and consensus was carried out among the partners leading to the definition of the organisational form that guarantees the deployment and the operation of the EASTIN network in the long run. A set of related legal instruments was produced, as described later in Chapter "Deployment potential and strategy".

Management

To ensure the optimal use of this expertise and to maximise productive interaction between partners, the work was divided into workpackages, each under responsibility of a partner and with all other partners responsible for specific tasks.

WP n.	Title	Responsible contractor
1	Project management	SIVA
2	Analysis and comparison of existing national information services	DLFDATA
3	Harmonisation of existing national services: requirements and specifications	SIVA
4	Adaptation of existing services for trans-national validation	REHADAT
5	Service validation by end-users	CEAPAT
6	Service validation by professionals	IRV
7	Service validation by assistive technology suppliers	SIVA
8	Exploitation, dissemination and deployment planning	HMIBASEN

All major Consortium decisions were taken in the Consortium Meetings, usually scheduled in order to mark the beginning or the last stage of each workpackage. Detailed *minutes* were compiled for each meeting, each agenda items being composed of a section *discussion notes* and a section *consortium decisions*; the minutes approval procedure was that all partners were allowed two weeks to formulate remarks by email, and no remark meant agreement.

Seven *Consortium meetings* were held:

- Milano (Italy), March 4-5, 2004, at Fondazione Don Gnocchi Onlus
- Taastrup (Denmark), May 10-11, 2004, at the Danish Centre for Technical Aids
- Cologne (Germany), November 8-9, 2004, at the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln
- Madrid (Spain), January 19-21, 2005, at Ceapat
- London (UK), April 28-29, 2005, at the Disabled Living Foundation
- Hoensbroek (The Netherlands), September 22-23, 2005, at IRV
- Milano (Italy), November 25, 2005, at Fondazione Don Gnocchi Onlus

A *consortium agreement* was developed and signed in the early stage of the project (June 2004) to set the internal consortium rules and to cater for confidentiality and IPR handling.

Overall, the Consortium operation was smooth. Although in several occasions the initial views of the partners were different, there was no critical event or disagreement that endangered the Consortium's ability to proceed towards the objectives established in the Technical Annex. The overall attitude of the each partner's project team was very committed and constructive.

The *mid-term review*, although convened by the Commission three months later than normally expected (March 14, 2005), was successful. The main recommendations received were about reinforcing the dissemination plan and the business plan and extending the validation timetable.

The complexity of the technical work involved in the project revealed higher than expected. This generated some delay in the definition of the harmonization / integration requirements and, as a consequence of it, in the implementation of the Eastin network. In order to allow sufficient time for the last stage of market validation, a three-months extension of the project was asked, and granted by the Commission. The new end date was set November 30, 2005.

This extension had no significant impact on the project resources, as the Consortium was able to handle it by distributing the same resources over a longer time span rather than investing additional resources. Conversely, a significant investment - initially unforeseen in the Technical Annex - was required for the legal expenses needed to implement the final Consortium decisions about deployment and exploitation. Authorisation to charge such expenses on the budgetline "other specific costs" was asked for, and granted

by the Commission. There were also some other variation in the use of resources across the various budget lines, however these were contained within the 20% of each partner's eligible costs.

The *final review* took place in Brussels on February 9, 2006. The project was judged successfully completed by the Commission.

NEXT STEPS

The way forwards: four steps

The planned steps in the deployment of the EASTIN network are the following.

Step 1: Starting operation of the EASTIN website

Immediately after the closure of the project, all partners have signed a license agreement with Don Gnocchi Sistemi Srl (an Information Technology Company based in Milano, Italy) to authorise publication of the data delivered by their webservices on the EASTIN website. In turn, Fondazione Don Gnocchi Onlus – partner in the Eastin project and owner of Don Gnocchi Sistemi srl – has committed to operate the Eastin website for free until the EASTIN Association will be incorporated. In case the incorporation is delayed later than December 31,2006 the license agreement recognises that further operation of the Eastin website will not be possible for free but on the basis of a commercial offer.

In the meanwhile, each partner will start its marketing and communication activities according to the roadmap indicated in the Final Business and Market Deployment Plan.

Step 2: Establishing the EASTIN Association

Soon after the closure of the project, all partners have initiated their internal procedures to achieve the official deliberations that commit their Organisations to join the EASTIN Association and to bear the related expenses. Such deliberation will also indicate the official representatives within the Association. After all partners have completed this process, the legal procedure will be carried out to incorporate the Association and the Association Bodies will be appointed. Each partner will then sign a licence agreement towards the Association, that in turn will contract the service provider (Don Gnocchi Sistemi srl) for the website maintenance and the basic administration services.

Step 3: Deploying the network through the EASTIN Association

When the Association is in position to fully operate (hopefully in Spring 2006), deployment will proceed according to the roadmap indicated in the Final Business and Market Deployment Plan. At this point it will be possible to start common marketing and communication activities, and consider possible inclusion of new partners that apply to join the EASTIN network. At the time of closing the EASTIN project, contacts with two prospective partners (Handicat, France, and KOC, Belgium) were already in progress.

Step 4: Proceeding with further developments

There is a number of topics tackled during the course of the EASTIN project that – although important – were assigned lower priority as they could not be addressed in the short timeframe of the project. They are mainly related to the improvements of standards adopted in the harmonised databases (terminology, classification, keywords etc..) and to the data collection flow (coordinated relationship with manufacturer and suppliers, data collection tools etc..). The EASTIN Association will be the ideal platform for proceeding with such developments.

APPENDICES

Deliverables produced

Deliverables List						
Due Date *	Deliv. No	Type (a)	Distrib (b)	WP (c)	Title and short description	Date delivered
06/04	1.1	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 1	16/06/04
09/04	1.2	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 2	21/09/04
12/04	1.3	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 3	28/12/04
03/05	1.4	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 4	05/04/05
06/05	1.5	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 5	08/07/05
09/05	1.6	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 6	28/09/05
12/05	1.7	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 7	22/12/05
	1.7 r	RE	C	1	Quarterly monitoring report 7, revised in response to the final review	10/03/06
02/05	APR	RE	C	1	Annual Project Review Report	01/03/05
12/05	FIN	RE	P	1	Final Public Report	09/01/06
	FIN r	RE	P	1	Final Public Report, revised in response to the final review	10/03/06
09/04	2.1	RE	P	2	Survey of current national services and integration needs	15/09/04
01/05	3.1	RE	C	3	Harmonization requirements and specification	03/02/05
05/05	4.1	PR	P	4	Trans-European Network: ready for market validation	15/05/05
11/05	4.2	OT	P	4	Trans-European Network: ready for market deployment	30/11/05
07/04	5.1	RE	C	5	Results of the end-users validation of existing systems	31/07/04
12/04	5.2	RE	C	5	Results of the end-users validation of harmonization requirements	18/01/05
09/05	5.3	RE	C	5	Validation results of the transnational network (combined with 6.3 / 7.3)	15/11/05
07/04	6.1	RE	C	6	Results of the professionals validation of existing systems	31/07/05
12/04	6.2	RE	C	6	Res. professionals validation of harmonization requirements	18/01/05
09/05	6.3	RE	C	6	Validation results of the transnational network (combined with 5.3 / 7.3)	15/11/05
07/04	7.1	RE	C	7	Results of the AT suppliers validation of existing systems	31/07/04
12/04	7.2	RE	C	7	Res. Manuf/suppliers validation of harmonization requirements	15/01/05
09/05	7.3	RE	C	7	Validation results of the transnational network (combined with 5.3 / 6.3)	15/11/05
04/04	8.1	OT	P	8	EASTIN website - 1 st version (public communication)	01/05/04
06/04	8.2	RE	C	8	Dissemination plan	09/07/04
07/04	8.3	RE	P	8	Proceedings of National workshops	01/03/05
08/04	8.4	RE	C	8	Draft Business Plan	28/12/04
04/05	8.5	OT	P	8	EASTIN printed brochures	01/07/04 01/10/05
05/05	8.2 r	RE	C	8	Dissemination plan, revised in response to the mid term review	06/05/05
05/05	8.4 r	RE	C	8	Draft Business Plan, revised in response to the mid term review	06/05/05
10/05	8.6	OT	P	8	Proceedings of Final International Workshop	22/12/05
11/05	8.7	OT	P	8	EASTIN website – final version (system integrator)	30/11/05
11/05	8.8	RE	C	8	Final Business Plan and Market Deployment Plan	05/01/06

(*) Date is referred to the end of the month from the start of the project

(a) PR = Prototype; RE = Report; SP = Specification, OT = Others.

(b) P = Public, for wide dissemination (public deliverables shall be of a professional standard in a form suitable for print or electronic publication); C = Confidential, limited to project beneficiaries.

(c) Corresponding to the specific WP they refer to.

Time table and schedules

EASTIN	GANTT CHART																				
	2004										2005										
W.package and task	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
WP1																					
deliverables				1.1			1.2			1.3			1.4			1.5			1.6		1.7
												APR									FIN
WP2																					
deliverables							2.1														
T2.1																					
T2.2																					
T2.3																					
WP3																					
deliverables											3.1										
T3.1																					
T3.2																					
T3.3																					
T3.4																					
T3.5																					
T3.6																					
WP4																					
deliverables															4.1					4.2	
T4.1																					
T4.2																					
T4.3																					
WP5																					
deliverables				5.1						5.2										5.3	
T5.1																					
T5.2																					
T5.3																					
T5.4																					
T5.5																					
WP6																					
deliverables				6.1						6.2										6.3	
T6.1																					
T6.2																					
T6.3																					
T6.4																					
T6.5																					
WP7																					
deliverables				7.1						7.2										7.3	
T7.1																					
T7.2																					
T7.3																					
T7.4																					
T7.5																					
WP8																					
deliverables		8.1		8.2						8.4			8.3		8.2/4				8.5	8.6 / 7 / 8	
T8.1																					
T8.2																					
T8.3																					
T8.4																					

Dissemination Activities

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner SIVA

Action	Carried out
<i>Creation of communication material</i>	
Letterhead Eastin / Siva for mail communication	29/06/04
Downloadable banners for linking to the Eastin & Siva Portale	15/07/04
Print of A4 (threefold) Eastin brochures in Italian, to inform about the project (2000 copies)	31/08/04
Print of A4 (threefold) Eastin brochures in English, to inform about the project (500 copies)	31/08/04
Print of Eastin / SIVA Posters 70x100 in Italian	31/08/04
Print of A3 Eastin / Siva Posters, in Italian	31/08/04
Set of 9 solid posters 70x100 for exhibition events	31/08/04
Print of A4 (threefold) Eastin brochure in Italian, to inform about the network (5000 copies)	01/10/05
Print of A4 (threefold) Eastin brochure in English, to inform about the network (300 copies)	01/10/05
Personal invitation letter to the Final International Workshop	01/10/05
PPT Presentation of the network, in English / Italian	30/11/05
Audiovisual recording of the Final International Workshop, available on demand on the Internet	15/11/05
<i>Mail advertisement</i>	
e-mail letter to all Companies listed in the SIVA Portal, with enclosed brochures in electronic form to inform about the project	01/09/04
Similar e-mail letter to all Centres listed in the SIVA Portal	01/09/04
Similar e-mail letter to a selected list of relevant organisations in the field of disability in Italy	01/09/04
Similar e-mail letter to a the Support Centres for Disabled Students of the Italian Universities	01/09/04
e-mail letter to the Directors of all Local Health Authorities (197) and of major Hospitals (102) throughout Italy	01/09/04
Letter by post to the Health and the Social Services Assessors of the 20 Italian Regions	01/10/04
e-mail letter to all addresses above, with enclosed brochures in electronic form to inform about the Eastin network and to announce the Final International Workshop	10/10/05
Similar letter by post to selected stakeholders in the field	10/10/05
<i>Devoted events</i>	
National Workshop (Milano, September 27-28 2004)	28/09/04
Final International Workshop (Milano, November 4 2005)	04/11/05
<i>Fairs</i>	
Exposanità (Bologna May 12-15 2004). One Booth and 2 workshops	15/05/04
Rehacare 2004 (Dusseldorf November 10-13 2004). Brochures within the Rehadat booth	13/11/04
Handimatica (Bologna November 25-27 2004). One Booth and 1 workshop	25/11/04
Rehacare 2005 (Dusseldorf October 12-15 2005). Brochures within the Rehadat booth	13/11/04
<i>Papers / presentations in scientific events or national meetings of Professional Societies</i>	
New Humanity Congress "Communication in Health" (Venezia October 23 2004)	23/10/04
GLIC (Inter-regional Group of AT Counselling Centres) – Arezzo April 26 2005	26/04/05
SIMFER (Nat'l Society Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) – Verona June 10/11 2005	11/06/05
AAATE 2005 (Lille September 6-9 2005) – Paper in parallel session	08/09/05
CSR (Nat'l Association of AT Manufacturers and Suppliers – Dusseldorf October 14 2005	14/10/05
TED (National Congress on Technology in Education) – Genova November 25, 2005	25/11/05
SIMFER (Nat'l Society Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) – Verona November 29 2005	29/11/05
<i>Articles on Sectoral Magazines of User Organisations or Professional Associations</i>	
Mobilità (specialised magazine on mobility and accessibility)	29/11/05
L'Unione e la Voce (house organ of the National Union of Civilian Disabled People)	23/09/04
Missione Uomo (house organ of Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi Onlus)	31/03/04
Missione Uomo (house organ of Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi Onlus)	30/11/05
<i>Ad-hoc presentations for selected Bodies</i>	
Ministry of Welfare	07/07/04

<i>Ad-hoc presentations in the Centres of the Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation</i>	
Milano (November 4 2005)	04/11/05
Torino (November 4 2005, in videoconference)	04/11/05
Marina di Massa (November 4 2005, in videoconference)	04/11/05
Sarzana (November 4 2005, in videoconference)	04/11/05
Falconara (November 4 2005, in videoconference)	04/11/05
Roma (November 4 2005, in videoconference)	04/11/05
Salerno (June 18 2005)	18/06/05
<i>Mass media</i>	
Periodic press releases issued by the Press/communication Office of the Don Gnocchi Foundation	About every 3 months
<i>Other professional organisations regularly targeted in mailing and in invitations to workshops/fairs</i>	
AITO (National Society of Occupational Therapists)	
AIFI (National Society of Physiotherapists)	
FIOTO (National Society of Orthopaedic Technicians)	
ADM-AREHA (National Association of AT suppliers)	
GLIC (Inter-regional Group of Assistive Technology Counselling Centres)	
SIGG (National Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology)	
IPASVI (National Society of Nurses)	
CIIS (National Coordination of Support Teachers)	
FADIS (National Federation of Teachers for Integration in the School)	
CNOPUS (National Coordination of Professionals of Spinal Units)	
<i>Users organisations regularly targeted in mailing and in invitations to workshops/fairs</i>	
FISH (National Federation against Handicap)	
FAND (National Federation of Associations of Disabled People)	
UILDM (Italian Muscular Dystrophy Association)	
FAIP (National Federation of Spinal Injured)	
UIC (Italian Blind Union)	
AIAS (Italian Spastics Society)	
Down Syndrom National Association	
Lombard Spina Bifida Association	
<i>Bodies regularly targeted in mailing and in invitations to workshops/fairs</i>	
Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali	
Ministero della Sanità	
Conferenza delle Regioni (Inter-Regional Coordination Body on Health Issues)	
Ministero dell'Istruzione	
Regione Lombardia	
Comune di Milano	
Regione Piemonte	
Regione Veneto	
Regione FriuliVG	
Regione Emilia Romagna	
Regione Toscana	
Regione Lazio	
Regione Liguria	
Regione Marche	
Regione Basilicata	
Regione Puglia	
Regione Calabria	

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner HMI

Action	Carried out
<i>Creation of communication material</i>	
Information on www.hmi.dk about the EASTIN project	05/04
Print of EASTIN brochure / English version	06/04
Print of A3 small posters EASTIN	06/04
Print of EASTIN brochure / Danish version	08/04
Solid posters 70x100 for exhibitions in Denmark	09/04
News banner on www.hmi-basen.dk with link to information about the project and call for participation in the validation group	03/05
HMI produced EASTIN brochure with launching dates / invitation	09/05
<i>Mail advertisement</i>	
E-mail announcing the Nordic, national events where EASTIN will be presented	Ad hoc
E-mail announcing the national workshop	08/04
Final brochure and invitations to the final workshop in Denmark were sent to approx 800 from the three target groups end-users, professionals and suppliers of AT.	08/05
E-mail announcing the final international workshop (approx 400 – validation group etc.)	08/05
The final EASTIN brochure was sent to approx 70 European organisations within the AT area	09/05
HMI newsletter September 2004 to approx 600 subscribers	09/04
HMI newsletter October 2005 to approx 600 subscribers	10/05
<i>Devoted events</i>	
National Workshop (22 September 2004)	09/04
Dialogue meetings with suppliers of AT	09/05
Final Workshop in Copenhagen October 2005	10/05
<i>Fairs and conferences</i>	
HITmesse (Nyborg, 21-22 September 2004)	09/04
COST 219 Conference, Copenhagen, 20 th October 2004	10/04
Rehacare (Dusseldorf 10-13 November). Communication material within the DRG booth	11/04
Tryksår Conference, Kolding October 2004	10/04
Seminar for Regionale Teknologi Miljøer, Korsør, December 2004	12/04
Danish Rehab yearly fair (3 days) April 2005	04/05
NAT-C, Gothenburg May 2005	05/05
HITmesse (Nyborg, 27-28 September 2005)	09/05
<i>Papers/ presentations in scientific events or national meetings of Professional Societies</i>	
Presentations of EASTIN at the DRG (Danish Rehabilitation Group) annual meeting	10/05
<i>Presentations in national Meetings of User Organisations</i>	
Presentations will be organized ad hoc during and after the project	Ongoing
<i>Presentations and discussions in Nordic meetings</i>	
Presentations of EASTIN have been done several times at the meetings with delegates from the national assistive technology institutes in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland.	Ongoing
<i>Articles on Sectoral Magazines</i>	
Article in the Ergoterapeuten	06/04
HIT	11/04
Hjælpemidlet	12/04
HIT – Launching of EASTIN	10/05
www.Sclerose.dk - EASTIN article and interview	09/05
Hjælpemidlet – Launching of EASTIN	12/05

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner REHADAT

Action	Carried out
<i>Communication Material</i>	
Printing of EASTIN brochure in German / English	08/2004
Printing of EASTIN poster 70x100 for fairs and exhibitions	08/2004
Producing of EASTIN banner 200x200 for International Workshop	10/2005
www.rehadat.de	
Link from REHADAT to the EASTIN-website	05/2004
Announcement of EASTIN in REHADAT-News	06/2004
Information of EASTIN in REHADAT-News	09/2004
Call for test user	05/2005
Information of EASTIN in REHADAT-News	05/2005
Information of EASTIN in REHADAT-News	09/2005
Information of EASTIN in REHADAT-News	12/2005
<i>Devoted Events</i>	
National Workshop (Cologne)	09/2004
International REHADAT-workshop (Düsseldorf)	10/2005
International DLF-Workshop (London)	10/2005
<i>Fairs</i>	
Orthopädie und Rehathechnik (Leipzig, Germany)	05/2004
Rehacare (Düsseldorf, Germany)	11/2004
Medica 2004 (Düsseldorf, Germany)	11/2004
Werkstätten-Messe (Offenbach, Germany)	03/2005
REHAB (Karlsruhe, Germany)	04/2005
Rehacare (Düsseldorf, Germany)	10/2005
<i>Congresses</i>	
2. International Forum on Disability Management (Amsterdam, Netherlands)	09/2004
14. Rehabilitationswissenschaftliches Kolloquium (Hannover, Germany)	02/2005
50. Ergotherapie Kongress (Cologne, Germany)	05/2005
8 th AAATE Conference for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (Lille, France)	10/2005
<i>Seminars / Presentations</i>	
REHADAT-Seminars in Cologne (once a month during the complete project duration)	
REHADAT-presentation at the ISO-meeting (WG 10) (Delft, Netherlands)	23.09.04
REHADAT-Seminar for the Integration Office in Münster (Münster, Germany)	24.11.04
REHADAT-presentation at the meeting of the Advisory Board for REHADAT	15.11.2004
REHADAT-presentation at the meeting of the Rehabilitation Advisory Board of the Federal Republic of Germany	30.11.04
REHADAT-Newsletter	09/2004
REHADAT-Newsletter	05/2005
REHADAT-Newsletter	09/2005
REHADAT-Newsletter	12/2005
<i>Press</i>	
Press Release / Editorial Contributions to:	09/2004
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Journals (77) Press departments of associations (200) Press agencies (10) 	
Press Release / Editorial Contributions to:	09/2005
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Journals (77) Press departments of associations (200) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press agencies (10) 	
Press Release / Editorial Contributions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Journals (77) • Press departments of associations (200) • Press agencies (10) 	12/2005
<i>Articles on Sectoral Magazines</i>	
Behinderten-guide	11/2004
Orthopädie-Technik	12/2004
InReha-Newsletter	01/2005
Rundschreiben AG Schwerbehindertenvertretung	04/2005
Kobinet	04/2005
Leben und Weg	05/2005
Handicapped-Kurier	06/2005
RehaCare Magazin	09/2005
Orthopädie-Technik	10/2005
MTD (Medizinisch-Technischer Dialog)	11/2005

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner DLF DATA

Action	Carried out
Creation of Communication Materials	
Designed and printed Alliance leaflet	01/04
Updated and reprinted Alliance leaflet	01/05
DLF organised the reproduction of the EASTIN leaflet in colour	10/05
DLF organised the design and printing of the EASTIN launch invites	09/05
Advertisement	
Circulated EASTIN materials to opinion formers and voluntary and public sector partners	ongoing
Emailed an announcement to DLF staff publicising the National Workshop	15/09/04
Promoting EASTIN in local and national press when opportunities arise	ongoing
DLF promoted EASTIN launch in the newsletter accompanying Part I of the Hamilton Directory (DLF Data)	04/05
DLF promoted EASTIN in the Annual Review 2003/4	10/04
DLF promoted EASTIN in the Annual Review 2004/5	10/05
DLF emailed over 300 key individuals from disability related organisations and AT manufacturers and suppliers	09/05
DLF mailed an EASTIN leaflet and invite to those interested in attending the Portcullis Event	09/05
Devoted Events	
National Workshop held at the DLF offices	15/09/04
DLF representative makes presentation at German Launch of EASTIN In Dusseldorf.	14/10/05
DLF launched the EASTIN project at Portcullis House – 100+ attendees	24/10/05
Conferences and Exhibitions	
<u>National Back Exchange Conference & Exhibition, Hinckley</u>	20-22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS chaired the Conference and announced the EASTIN project Leaflets and posters displayed 	09/04
<u>Independent Living Exhibition, Wembley</u>	22-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF participated and promoted EASTIN by distributing leaflets and word of mouth 	09/04
<u>Moving & Handling Conference & Exhibition, London</u>	10-11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF chaired this annual event which is jointly organised by DLF and EMAP publishers European partner, REHADAT attended the event and participated in 	03/05
<u>Independent Living Exhibition, Scotland</u>	6-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF attended and promoted EASTIN by distributing leaflets and word of mouth 	04/05
<u>Naidex, Birmingham</u>	24-26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF participated and promoted EASTIN 	05/05
<u>Independent Living Exhibition, Alexander Palace</u>	19,20,21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF participated and promoted EASTIN 	09/05
<u>Southwark Carers Information Day</u>	29/09/05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF participated and promoted EASTIN 	
<u>DWP Conference - Improving Life Chances of Disabled People</u>	8/11/05 –
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF participated and promoted the launch of EASTIN at a conference organised by the Department for Work & Pensions. 	09/11/05
National Meetings of Professional Societies	
<u>RAATE National Conference 2004, Birmingham</u>	8-9/12/05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF promoted EASTIN in a presentation to attendees. 	11/04
<u>London ICES group meetings (last meeting 28/01/05)</u>	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLF discussed the progress of the EASTIN project with members 	
Strategy launch meeting for The Allied Health Professionals in Dorset HealthCare NHS Trust	21/06/05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributed EASTIN leaflets to Trust and Social Services representatives 	
Presentations in National Meetings of User Organisations	
DLF presented to the Foundation of Assistive Technology (FAST) members	28/02/05

Representations to Minister for Community, Department of Health	ongoing
Reports on the progress of EASTIN submitted to DLF Trustees	ongoing
Articles published	
Editorial written for the AT Forum Bulletin produced by FAST	13/05/04
Editorial written about EASTIN for Assistive Technology magazine	07/04
Editorial in the Paddington Times covered the MEP visit to DLF to discuss EASTIN	04/08/04
Editorial written about EASTIN for innovations in information (Vol.10 No. 3)	2004
Editorial in Therapy Weekly requested healthcare volunteers for the EASTIN validation project	14/10/04
Editorial update written for Equipment Service Journal	01/05
Editorial in the emailed THHS Bulletin requested volunteers from the Assistive Technology/Homecare sector for the EASTIN validation project	14/04/05
Editorial in the ICES bulletin requesting volunteers	05/05
Editorial on the Ability Magazine website	10/10/05
Editorial on the FAST website detailing the project	
Editorial in Assistive Technology (AT) Forum News Bulletin No. 26	11/05
Editorial written about EASTIN for innovations in information	11/05
Briefings	
NPS addressed the External Reference Group on Community Equipment at the Department of Health (15 minute presentation on EASTIN)	21/07/04
NPS briefed MEP, Robert Evans on EASTIN	26/07/04
NPS briefed Ministers, keynote speakers and the consultant team	10/05
Other	
DLF created an International Contacts List to disseminate information to a worldwide audience	05/05
DLF to use email signatures of staff involved in the project to further publicise the launch to interested parties	ongoing
DLF wrote and distributed a press release to the trade press to announce the launch of EASTIN at Portcullis House	10/05
DLF posted press release on www.dlf.org.uk	10/05
DLF organised the production of a free standing board to use at the Portcullis and Department for Work & Pensions conference	10/05
DLF to promote EASTIN launch in a DLF email newsletter to be launched in December	12/05
DLF to promote the EASTIN launch in Part 3 of DLF Data	04/06

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner CEAPAT

Action	Carried out
Communication material	
EASTIN brochure. Spanish version	31/05/04
EASTIN website. Spanish version	10/06/04
Link to the EASTIN-Website in the CEAPAT website: www.ceapat.org	15/06/04
Presentation of EASTIN in the "News" section in the CEAPAT website	15/07/04
Mail advertisement: mailing list to contact centres of CEAPAT	15/07/04
Dissemination among Centres of Technical Aids in Spain : 75 centres in all Autonomous Communities of Spain	15/07/04
Presentations in national events	
Open Doors Week of CEAPAT: official presentation of EASTIN project and distribution of brochures (Madrid. Spain)	31.05 - 4.06/04
Information session. University of Burgos	9.3.05
International Congress: "Augmentative and Alternative Communication" IMSERSO. Madrid	13-14.5.05
Seminar for Specific Centres of Special Education. Zaragoza	21.5.05
Congress: "Technology and Special Education". University of Valencia	29-30.06.05
Fairs	
Minusval (Lleida. Spain)	4-8.10.04
Orto 2004 (Madrid. Spain)	25-27.11.04
Orprotec (Valencia. Spain)	24-26.11.05
Papers/presentations in scientific events or meetings of Professional Societies	
College La Salle. Postgraduate Course on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (Madrid)	July.04
Tecnoneet, 2004. III National Congress of Technologies for Diversity (Murcia. Spain)	23-25. 9.04
AICE (Cochlear Implant Association)	15.10.04
Course at the Professional Association of Psychologists (Madrid). Papers presented: "Accessibility, Research and Development in Europe", "New Technologies" "Mobility, Independent Living, Technical Aids for Personal Autonomy"	16-23.10.04
International Forum of Spinal Cord Injury (Hospital of Paraplegia. Toledo. Spain)	26-29.10.04
Master on Integration and Disability. IMSERSO and University of Salamanca (Santiago de Chile)	29.10-6.11.04
Regular Mailing and Invitation to Workshops	
Users Associations, Professionals, Retailers	Various dates
Articles on Sectorial Magazines	
<i>Minusval</i> , bulletin published by IMSERSO - 'Eastin, European Network of Information about Technical Aids' - 'East in Project. Disability Technology in Internet.'	Mar-Apr 2005 Sept-Oct 2005
"EASTIN Project. European network of information on technical aids", <i>Boletín del CEAPAT</i> , Nº 50 (2005) ¹	01/12/04

¹*Minusval* and the *Boletín del CEAPAT* have a broad distribution in Central and South America, as well as in Spain

Dissemination Activities carried out by Partner HulpmiddelenWijzer

Actions	Carried out
<i>Creation of communication material</i>	
Print of EASTIN brochure English	12/04
<i>Website links</i>	
Link from HulpmiddelenWijzer to the EASTIN website	05/04
Link from iRv website to the EASTIN website	07/04
Information of EASTIN on iRv website	07/04
<i>Mail advertisement</i>	
E-mail letter to all companies listed in the HulpmiddelenWijzer	03/05
E-mail letter to the subscribers of the HulpmiddelenWijzer	03/05
E-mail letter to relevant organisation in the field of disability	03/05
E-mail sending to above addressees with first announcement of the international workshop	09/05
<i>Devoted events</i>	
National workshop	11/04
International workshop	12/05
<i>Fairs and conferences</i>	
Support beurs 2004 (brochure)	05/04
50 plus beurs 2004	09/04
Congress 'Domotica & Veiligheid'	09/04
Nationale Manifestatie ' in beweging' .	11/04
<i>Papers/ presentations in scientific events or national meetings of Professional Societies</i>	
Presentations at insurance organisation	06/05
<i>Presentations in national Meetings of User Organisations</i>	
Presentations during and after the project	Ongoing
<i>Articles on Sectoral Magazines</i>	
Support Magazine	12/05

Impact of the launch events

International

The event was organised as a Plenary Session within the major European Scientific Conference on Assistive Technology (AAATE 2006, held in Lille, France). The audience came from all over Europe and was composed mainly of academics, clinicians and technologists, many of them playing key roles in promoting assistive technology and related services both in their Countries and at international level. For those interested in further details, a peer-reviewed scientific paper – including design technicalities on the Eastin network – was also presented in a scientific session and published in the proceedings book².

The intended goal of this event was mostly awareness raising on the potential of the Eastin network in 1) meeting the AT information needs of European citizens 2) promoting the advancement of the AT industry in Europe and 3) influencing national AT policies both in the Countries where information systems already exist and in the Countries where they don't. The event was also an opportunity to explore possible future enlargements of the Eastin network to include other new national information systems, such as the French *Handicat* and the Belgian *Koc*. Also *Abledata*, the major AT information system in the United States was present to explore possible further exploitation at worldwide level.

This “*premiere*” of the Eastin network was highly appreciated by the AAATE community. It was highlighted that Eastin succeeded in achieving what had been the goal of the EU *Handynet* project many years ago – although with a different approach: not as a centralised database (which had revealed not possible for technical, organisational, economic and political reason) but as a flexible network of databases. As all EU Countries were represented, the event was the first major opportunity for advertising Eastin at EU level and prepare the ground for further dissemination activities.

Italy

The aim of the workshop was to launch the EASTIN portal within the wider framework of the Fondazione Don Gnocchi's activities in information on AT devices and independent living. First, it provided a comprehensive picture of the current situation in Italy and in Europe in the field of AT provision to citizens; then it discussed the role the EASTIN portal will play in empowering people with disabilities to make informed choices. The discussion involved representatives from governmental institutions, end users associations, health care professionals and industrialists. The workshop was also broadcast live through the Internet, with 821 accesses reported, in additions to the people who participated at distance in 5 other Centres of the Don Gnocchi Foundation throughout Italy.

The audience's response was great. In terms of numbers it was beyond expectations (in particular, such a large audience through the Internet was not expected). In terms of qualification, the audience included key people at national and regional level from users organisations, from the public administration, from health and social professionals and from Industry.

The main achievements of the workshop can be summarised as follows:

- increased awareness of the importance of assistive technology and of the role that EASTIN as well as Portale SIVA can play to facilitate advancement of the AT sector in Italy
- reinforcement of the relationship with the Ministry of Welfare, in view of ensuring continuous financial support to the SIVA Portal (after the event, the Ministry confirmed renewal of support for the next years, which was afterwards signed in January 2006)
- increased profile of the Don Gnocchi Foundation as one of the Italian and European leaders in this field
- improved awareness by Industry of the role the SIVA Portal and EASTIN can play in improving the quality of the AT market

² *Assistive Technology from Virtuality to Reality* (eds A.Prusky, H.Knops). IOS Press, Amsterdam 2005

The strengthened relationship with Industry led to an agreement with a major national association of manufacturers and suppliers (CSR) to ensure the quality of the information provided through a self-accredited scheme (Repertorio CSR degli Ausili) to be ensured through a 'information quality mark'. Through a contract with Fondazione Don Gnocchi, CSR provided the economic resources for the IT implementation of this scheme and connect it to Portale Siva (and thus to Eastin).

Germany

The intended goal of the workshop was to launch the EASTIN network and make it well known to the public. The chosen venue was strategic, as the workshop was held within REHACARE 2005, the major Assistive Technology Fair worldwide. The goal was also to increase awareness on the key role AT information plays in disability policies, to strengthen the profile of REHADAT as the major AT information provider in Germany, and to emphasize its role at international level. The situation of the provision with technical devices for people with disabilities was presented and discussed from experts with different perspectives: people with disabilities, end users associations, health care professionals, industrialists, a representative from the European Commission and a representative from the European Disability Forum.

The main result of the workshop was an increased awareness that the citizens' information needs on AT products and related topics cannot be met simply by the current general-purpose Internet tools but require specialised services. Rehadat at national level, and Eastin at international level, have been recognised as appropriate instruments to fulfil those needs, especially for people with disabilities and health care professionals. This 'message' was especially understood by industrialist, who appreciated the fact that product information entered on Rehadat will flow internationally through the Eastin network, and that they will be able to interact more directly with the network through the 'new product alert' function.

After the workshop, Eastin has become part of the public relations activities of Rehadat. National and international press and organizations will be informed regularly about new contents. Rehadat's automatic translation procedure will be constantly updated to ensure a steady high text standard.

Denmark

The audience was composed of a restricted number of selected key persons at national level, as representatives of end-users, professionals, industrialists and policy makers. There were also representatives from Norway and Sweden. The workshop was not primarily intended for a large audience of private people such as end-users or relatives, as the Danish Centre primarily works with professionals and industry. Thus a personal invitation was sent enclosing the informative leaflet on the EASTIN network.

The main impact of the workshop is that the Danish Centre is now more than ever seen as the institution which brings international knowledge regarding assistive technology to Denmark. The outcome is satisfactory in that this was the main intended objective.

The discussion held within the workshop did not suggest significant changes to the Danish Centre's national deployment strategy, but rather confirmed it. In particular, it was recognised that there is a huge informative work to be done to inform especially private persons (end-users and relatives) about the existence of Eastin.

Regarding prospective new Eastin partners, after the workshop Sweden and Norway have shown interest in joining the network. This possibility will be further investigated when the Eastin Association will operational.

United Kingdom

The impact of the International workshop on the DLF generally was to raise its profile as a major information provider amongst its relevant markets, audiences and users. Over 300 invitations were sent to

those in senior positions across the AT sector, to central and local Government officials and to those representing user groups and industry.

Of the 110 attending many followed up the event by featuring Eastin in their journals (e.g. editorial in Ability magazine where an experienced builder of AT databases reviewed the Eastin project). Our links with our partner Countries were strengthened by the attendance of German and Italian partners who were able to give an overview to a predominantly British audience of provision of AT information across Europe.

The importance of the workshop in the current UK political context was profound: the event was endorsed and attended by a Government Minister who noted that the launch took place at the moment when the UK held the Presidency of the European Union. Karen Buck MP said that Eastin was happening in the context of the Presidency and also the Government's 20 year strategy "Improving Life Chances of Disabled People" where one of its key practical steps was to set up the Office for Disability Issues.

EASTIN is now embedded in the DLF future marketing and communications strategy and will be part of the regular flow of information to national and international press and media connections. This will serve to highlight the importance of DLF and its work to an audience wider than just the UK. It places the charity in a strong position to lobby for future development funds and position it as the major information provider in its field.

The Netherlands

Through the Final Workshop the main target groups of the EASTIN network (end-users, professionals and industrialists) became more aware of the importance of information services on Assistive Technology.

Especially industry became aware of the impact and the importance of the HulpmiddelenWijzer at national and now, through EASTIN, at international level. In fact, after the workshop they have become more cooperative in delivering complete and up to date information on their products to the HulpmiddelenWijzer editorial team. This improves the overall quality of the information within the HulpmiddelenWijzer and the quality of Dutch information delivered by the EASTIN Portal.

The workshop also established an internal discussion at iRv. The starting point of such discussion was the remarks of end-users on the appropriateness and availability of information for their specific situation. Ensuring that the information provided meets the need of the target group is a serious point of interest in the future deployment of the Eastin network. This involves for HulpmiddelenWijzer an increased attention on the relevance of the information being collected and additional investments in the communication with the target groups.

Spain

The Spanish partner decided to launch the Eastin network through a major editorial initiative instead of through a workshop. In the Spanish context this was felt as the most effective way to ensure outreach to a wider audience.

On number 153 (September-October, 2005) of its bimonthly magazine *Minusval* (34.000 copies print run), the National Institute of Elderly People and Social Services (IMSERSO) published a 18-pages insert containing the following articles:

- *EASTIN Red Europea de Información sobre Tecnologías para la Discapacidad y la Autonomía* (European information network of technologies for disability and autonomy) by Renzo Andrich
- *Alianza Internacional de Intercambio de Información* (International Alliance of Information Exchange) by Ana Sánchez
- *¿Qué nos ofrece Eastin?* (What does Eastin offer to us?) by Reyes Noya
- *Validación por usuarios de ayudas técnicas* (Validation of Technical Aids' users) by Ana Sánchez

- *Ayudas Técnicas, un derecho de las personas con discapacidad* (Technical Aids, a right of people with disabilities) by Miguel Laloma
- *La AAATE y las tecnologías de apoyo* (AAATE and the assistive technologies) by Cristina Rodríguez-Porrero
- *AIDCAT/IBV Base de datos de productos valorados* (AIDCAT/IBV Tested products database) by Ricard Barberá
- *Innovaciones y mejoras del Catálogo de Ayudas Técnicas* (Innovations and improvements at the Ceapat Database) by Ruth Zamorano, Rafael Luque and José Ignacio Godino.

The impact of this publication was considerable, as this magazine is the main reference publication on disability issues in Spain and is also distributed in Latin America. Organisations of end users, such as for instance the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind (ONCE) showed their interest contacting CEAPAT for more information. Professionals knew very little about Eastin before; after the publication a large amount of them visited www.eastin.info, especially for searching products.

The interest from Companies increased, as demonstrated by the increased number of Companies that contacted Ceapat for being included in the national database (and therefore in Eastin) showing their willingness to give information about their products.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is the Ministry Imsero depends on, publicly congratulated Ceapat for having used accessible means to make information more transparent to citizens.