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## Abstract

This is the project pilot trials' monitoring and evaluation report, providing the end of project evaluation of the LEGESE Pilot service in 3 varied Legislative Authority contexts, countries and languages to measure how the LEGESE service contributes to the Democratic Renewal and increased Citizen Legislative Engagement in the 3 Regions, by a 25% increase in citizen participation in local legislative and democratic activities, and interactions by the end of the 9 month Pilot Trials period.

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is the LEGESE project pilot trials' Monitoring and Evaluation report, providing evaluation of the LEGESE Pilot service in 3 varied Legislative Authority contexts, countries and languages to assess the legislative participation impact of LEGESE and its relationship to wider aspects of e-governance, to establish the varying contextual issues that need to be addressed in implementing LEGESE in different legislative, constitutional, political and linguistic environments. This is a key input to the LEGESE Viability Plan (D2.3.2).

This evaluation also measures how the LEGESE service contributes to the Democratic Renewal and increased Citizen Legislative Engagement in the 3 Regions, by a 25% increase in citizen participation in local legislative and democratic activities, and interactions by the end of the 9 month Pilot Trials period.

This LEGESE evaluation looks at the full scope of the LEGESE project and examines each of the following areas:

1. Evaluation of the project against all stated objectives and business plan assumptions
2. Evaluation of the system usage by the public and its democratic impacts
3. Cost benefit analysis from the point of view of the actors involved
4. Review of the LEGESE methodology
5. Technical evaluation of platform performance
6. SWOT analysis for wider deployment

For each of those criteria, the scope of work is defined and actors are identified.

## 1. Introduction

The implementation of European Directives and other legislation at regional and local level has a major impact on citizens' lives, but few are aware or participate in the local implementation of such legislation. LEGESE ([www.legese.org](http://www.legese.org)) is a web-based service which trials ways to encourage easy communication and information exchange for effective public participation in the legislation implementation phase of European initiated legislation at the local and regional levels that are most directly relevant to most citizens' lives.

The service was built on existing technology – the eParticipate Public-i platform – and extended with additional features:

- XML forms for intelligent data collection
- Jargon Buster – a specialised search facility which provides definition of legislative terms

Further to these LEGESE-created tools the Bristol Pilot site also made extensive use of their existing eDemocracy tools – an multimedia discussion board (Viewfinder) as well as their online petitioning tool. These tools are also discussed in this evaluation document.

The core platform provides multimedia webcasting supported by contextual information and feedback facilities ([www.public-i.eu](http://www.public-i.eu)).

The LEGESE Partners are:

	Partner		Role	Web
1	National Microelectronics Applications Centre Ltd	IE	Project Manager, Coordinator, evolution from eParticipate eTEN project.	<a href="http://www.mac.ie">www.mac.ie</a>
2	Public-I Group Ltd	GB	Technology Platform service Provider & Evaluator.	<a href="http://www.public-i.eu">www.public-i.eu</a>
3	Software602	CZ	XML Forms engine & development	<a href="http://www.602.cz">www.602.cz</a>
4	Bristol County Council	GB	ePetitioner System & User Org/Field Trials	<a href="http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk">www.bristol-city.gov.uk</a>
(6)	Fingal County Council	IE	User Organisation/Field Trials	<a href="http://www.fingalcoco.ie">www.fingalcoco.ie</a>
6	Vysocina Regional Authority	CZ	User Org/Field Trials - New Member State	<a href="http://www.kr-vysocina.cz">www.kr-vysocina.cz</a>

This report is the LEGESE project pilot trials' monitoring and evaluation final report, providing evaluation of the LEGESE Pilot service in 3 varied Legislative Authority contexts, countries and languages to assess the legislative participation impact of LEGESE and its relationship to wider aspects of e-governance, to establish the varying contextual issues that need to be addressed in implementing LEGESE in different legislative, constitutional, political and linguistic environments. This is a key input to the LEGESE Viability Plan (D2.3.2).

This plan also measures how the LEGESE service contributes to the Democratic Renewal and increased Citizen Legislative Engagement in the 3 Regions, by a 25% increase in citizen

participation in local legislative and democratic activities and interactions by the end of the 9 month Pilot Trials period.

This LEGESE evaluation looks at the full scope of the LEGESE project and examines each of the following areas<sup>1</sup>:

1. Evaluation of the project against all stated objectives and business plan assumptions
2. Evaluation of the system usage by the public and its democratic impacts
3. Cost benefit analysis from the point of view of the actors involved
4. Review of the LEGESE methodology
5. Technical evaluation of platform performance
6. SWOT analysis for wider deployment

Deadlines for delivery were staggered throughout the project with a mid project review point in February 2008 to ensure that all major assumptions required for the final Viability Plan deliverable would be addressed and results were reported quarterly in the management reports.

Where data needed to be gathered from actors outside of the project team then data collection was planned into two main periods (up to February 2008 and up to September 2008) in order to ensure that it was done efficiently.

The project team originally had a French partner, Mairie D'Elancourt. However because of internal difficulties they had to retire from the project and were replaced by Fingal County Council (FCC) from Ireland. As a result the Fingal trial started very late in the project and the evaluation as a result focused on their set-up and initial proposition and does not show the volume of data gathered from the other two sites.

This late change to the project team did delay data collection and has delayed the delivery of this deliverable to enable the team to include evaluation data from Fingal as well as from the other sites.

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<sup>1</sup> These are discussed in D2.1.1 LEGESE Evaluation Plan, May 2007

## 2. Evaluation Approach

The objectives of the evaluation of the initial service deployment of the LEGESE Pilot service in 3 varied Legislative Authority contexts, countries and languages are:

- To establish the varying contextual issues that need to be addressed in implementing LEGESE in different legislative, constitutional, political and linguistic environments
- To evaluate the legislative participation impact of LEGESE and its relationship to wider aspects of e-governance.
- To show how the services directly contribute to the Democratic Renewal and increased Citizen Legislative Engagement in those Regions, by a 25% increase in citizen participation in local legislative and democratic activities and interactions by the end of the 9 month Pilot Trials period.
- To provide input to the LEGESE Viability Plan (D2.3.2).

The key aim of the 3 Pilot Trials operational sites and their evaluation was to prove whether the LEGESE approach is effective and sustainable and whether it would scale-up for use at National and EU levels. Thus the Evaluation particularly looked at:

- Whether the LEGESE platform does address the Legislative Process eParticipation needs of local government in various contexts (as defined in D1.1.1).
- If there is a viable revenue model that can be established to sustain the service in the various contexts.
- Whether the service can be delivered in multiple contexts and languages across Europe on an operational basis.
- If alternative solutions and services are accommodated.

The approach was a mix of quantitative data which could be collected directly from the websites and also more qualitative information which was gathered by interview and focus groups as well as through discussion and review at project team meetings.

As can be seen below the evaluation was split into a number of sections.

Due to the late start of Fingal, as discussed in the last section, the three pilot sites did not run in parallel as planned which has meant that the evaluation has less comparison information than was initially planned. The use of additional tools at Bristol – and the general agreement in their effectiveness – has also reduced the direct comparisons available for evaluation.

As will be seen in the different sections and in the conclusion, the major learning from LEGESE was in forming views as to how the system should evolve to have more impact as it was obvious fairly early from the Bristol experience that more interactivity is required in order to create a sustainable platform.

### 3. Evaluation type 1: Service Provision evaluation

This is the first layer of the LEGESE evaluation process and targets overall service provision for the platforms installed in each of the 3 sites. As such it is not the most detailed of evaluation but aims at giving a quick all round first take of what was delivered, what worked well, what could be improved and what could we do next. This section of the evaluation looks at

- Description of benefits of the service with respect to democratic renewal and citizen engagement
- Scope of implementation (i.e. inclusion of audio / website integrations etc)
- Description of webcast outputs
- Scenarios of potential applications for the service

To do this we will look first as a content and usage analysis before examining the functionality offered and used.

#### 3.1 Content review

Below is a summary of the content plans from each of the sites:

#### 3.2 Bristol

Bristol focused their content around Climate Change and the Second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II). As well as the background information and webcasts made available on each of the LEGESE sites, Bristol were also able to use online discussions and petitions. Using the Select Committee structure the team was able to keep content focused and with multiple content types they were able to attract a wide audience.

Bristol's LEGESE microsite webcast figures and usage data, were as follows:

	Title	Live date	Live	Archive	Category
1	Climate Change Select Committee	04-Oct-07	18	450	Scrutiny
2	Exposed! Climate Change in Britain's Backyard - The Debate	12-Nov-07	123	2178	LEGESE: Webcast feed
3	Climate Change Select Committee	15-Nov-07	107	424	Scrutiny
4	Climate Change Select Committee	13-Dec-07	51	869	Scrutiny
5	Climate Change Select Committee	24-Jan-08	73	570	Cabinet
6	Climate Change Select Committee	21-Feb-08	91	500	Cabinet
7	Climate Change Select Committee	11-Mar-08	75	468	Cabinet
8	Full Council Meeting	01-Apr-08	156	893	Full Council
9	Climate Change Select Committee - final meeting	06-May-08	53	584	Audit & Corporate Governance
10	Green Capital Debate - Bristol fit for the future?	05-Jun-08	36	444	Audit & Corporate Governance
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>783</b>	<b>7380</b>	

As is visible from the above table, the Bristol Climate Change had 10 successful webcasts. The total amount of viewers of the live webcasts was 783 (an average of 78 per webcast) and 7380 who watched in archived versions of the webcasts (an average of 738 per webcast).

In addition to this webcast data the LEGESE site also supported an online discussion and petitions. These were as follows:

	Title	Type	Live date	Closing date	Contributions
1	Protect and enhance green spaces instead of flogging 90 acres to developers	ePetition	23.01.08	02.06.08	
2	Allow car sharers to use bus lanes	ePetition	20.11.07	19.03.08	
3	Climate Change - What do you think	Online discussion	23.11.07	25.02.08	
4	Avonmouth Wind Turbine Proposal	Online discussion	05.03.08	03.05.08	

### 3.3 Vysocina

Vysocina focused their content around Waste Management legislation. Vysocina Usage Statistics were as follows:

Title	Live date	Live	Archive	Category
Workshop: Separating of waste material	28-Jul-08	0	255	Audit and Corporate Governance
5 years of the cooperation of the Vysocina region with the EKO-KOM Company in the field of waste material separation	07-May-08	1	223	Audit and Corporate Governance
I am separating, you're separating, we're separating?	09-Jul-08	1	189	Audit and Corporate Governance
Interview with MEP Ing. Oldrich Vlasák	07-Jul-08	0	156	Audit and Corporate Governance
Interview with MEP Dr. Ivo Strejček	29-Aug-08	0	123	Audit and Corporate Governance
5 let spolupráce kraje Vysočina se společnostmi EKO-KOM, a.s. v oblasti třídění odpadů	22-Apr-08	1	40	Conference
Rozhovor s europoslancem Ing. Oldřichem Vlasákem	05-Jun-08	1	38	Conference

As is visible from the above table, the Vysocina LEGESE site had 7 successful webcasts. The total amount of viewers of the live webcasts was 3 and 1024 who watched in archived versions of the webcasts (an average of 146 per webcast).

Vysocina made much more comprehensive use of the background information than the other pilot sites with both EU documentation and best practice information from the region.

### 3.4 Fingal

Fingal choose to focus on Waste Management and the EU Directive 2006/12/EC on Waste. By the end of the project in September 2008, they did not have a chance to generate a huge amount of content and only had one webcast – with another planned for December 2008.

	Title	Live date	Live	Archive	Category
1	Landfill, Regional Needs & Local Rights	22 Oct 2008	0	8	Other

The viewership figures are also considerably lower than Fingal’s usual numbers – there is no obvious explanation and as such is attributed to a lack of marketing of the new LEGESE service.

In the future the main content of the LEGESE site is to present the different stages of the development of a regional landfill site located within Fingal’s administrative area. The LEGESE micro site will act as a portal through which the public can monitor and comment on the process of this development.

### 3.5 Content Summary

One of the successes of the project has been that the pilot sites were able to find existing content to re-use on the LEGESE sites rather than needing to create new content. Content was mainly provided by Subject Experts within the Pilot organisations and then uploaded by the project team. This did not prove to be an excessive burden to maintain.

*‘The space is neat. It draws together relevant information from a wide variety of sources. Space has a range of formats: ‘heavy weight’ printed, ‘light weight’ ie discussions, and webcast (which has an element of entertainment)’ Bristol City Council Officer*

### 3.6 Functionality analysis

The LEGESE service offers a range of functionality to the end user. This includes:

- Basic website features with web based content management system
- Fully contextualised video content – both live and on-demand
- Document store
- JargonBuster – a specialised search tool which provides descriptions of terms from EU legislative sources

As described above, Bristol also made use of their multimedia discussion board and ePetitioning system.

As can be evidenced above this core functionality, with one exception, has been used at all sites and can be seen to have attracted a sizeable audience of citizens.

The exception was in the JargonBuster tool which was rarely used. The reasons for this are discussed in the next section.

What was also very clear was the critical role played by the more interactive features that were the addition to the Bristol site. These were far more utilised than the more passive content. It is interesting however to consider that these features were valued equally by the Members, Officers and the Public where the information resource content was, anecdotally at least, more valued by the Officers and Members. It was not possible to explore why this was but does support future sites being built with a focus on interactivity.

*'It's fabulous - makes it easy for busy working people to get a voice in local government - very much appreciated :-)' (Bristol resident)*

*'I valued being able to view the council meetings in my own time. I could revisit as I chose. Having background information in one place was very convenient. ' (Bristol resident)*

Interestingly the citizens in Vysocina also indentified the importance of the discussion board technology as an important extension to the project:

*"All the user groups were satisfied with the results, and some wanted the ability to have a discussion board in order to share new trends in waste management." Vyysocina citizen feedback*

### **3.7 Ease of use of the LEGESE site**

A number of user commented on the structure of the site and on the convenience of having all of the related content in one place. This really is the strength of the LEGESE service and a highly repeatable finding. As can be seen from the comments below the appreciation of this approach was across all stakeholders:

*'The structure of LEGESE space is friendlier than the City Council site, which is 'clunky and less accessible ' (Council Officers / Bristol)*

*'LEGESE space architecture is policy based and not based on the architecture of the council. Make far more accessible (eg need to go through travel policy to get bus timetable)' Council Officers / Bristol)*

*All functionalities of the Legese page were adequate and easy to use. The combination of the webcasting with the data provided in the files such as web or pdf format was interesting. (Vyoscina)*

*The benefits of providing information in this way are clear and should be used more in the future. (Vyoscina)*

### **3.8 Improved audience reach**

With audiences of around 4,000 and 1,000 respectively both Bristol and Vysocina can show substantial interest in their LEGESE sites. Vysocina does not have a baseline to judge this against as it was a new initiative but it is interesting to examine the impact that the LEGESE project has had on the pre-existing Select Committee process at Bristol:

#### **Bristol Select Committee Webcast statistics**

In total there were 4023 viewings of the 6 Select Committee webcasts. 468 of these were live and 3534 as archives. By contrast it is noted that the maximum number that can be accommodated in the Council Chamber is approximately 100. Influenced reporting and relationship between the Select Committee and Citizens ~ channel for public voice to be heard *Bristol*

If we take the baseline as being the 20-25 which might be the peak public attendance at a select committee then this is an even larger increase in participation.

The experience at Vysocina showed increased audience reach in a different way:

*A large majority of citizens are already democratically active (with a keen interest in public issues). The particular benefits perceived from the LEGESE service were being informed about the legal and political aspects of the waste management topic on the regional level.(Vyoscina)*

*Uncommonly for the Czech Republic, the users of the LEGESE service were not active members of a community. Owing to this, they were pleased to be able to have a source for relevant information to gather and connect with the necessary contacts.(Vyoscina)*

*A particularly positive aspect of the project was that some of the content could be used by university students, waste management specialists and citizens. For an EU project, a collection of this number of collaborating user groups is very uncommon.(Vyoscina)*

### **3.9 JargonBuster**

The JargonBuster tool was conceived as a way of helping citizens understand the more arcane language of EU legislation. The tool provides a look up of terms against EU sources and offers a number of definitions for them. The tool was placed on every page of the LEGESE sites however as can be seen below the usage of this was minimal, with only 15 viewers going on to use these feature from the homepage.

The project team have three different proposals as to why this tool was not a success:

- Lack of marketing

- None of the pilot sites explicitly marketed the JargonBuster tool as it was seen as being self explanatory. However it could be that the audience needed more direction and explanation of the purpose of the tool
- Lack of clarity of results
  - JargonBuster results are simply displayed as content pulled straight from EU sources. The language has not been mediated in any way and for the lay person may not actually be an explanation as to the concept that they were looking at
  - This is a anecdotal finding however most of the people spoken to were using search terms which were much more colloquial than the data set being searched and would offer return nil results. This is an issue which is being explored as part of the FEED project<sup>2</sup>.
- Lack of interest in EU legislation
  - Most of the citizens that have been used the sites were still much more interested in the local level impact, rather than the EU legislation that led to it.

### 3.10 Conclusions

#### **Single issue websites work**

The most significant lesson learned from the project is the positive reaction that all participants had to a single issue website. This should perhaps not be a surprise but the ease of use and the clarity achieved for the citizens was very important to the success of the Vysocina and Bristol pilots. The fact that this was achieved with pre-existing content means that this is a cost effective way of making participation more straightforward for the citizen.

#### **Webcasting content helps build interest**

This finding builds on the work in the eParticipate project<sup>3</sup> that showed considerable democratic and service benefits from webcasting democratic content. This finding has been reinforced with the findings from this project.

#### **No proven increase in interest in the EU process**

Where the project teams are not able to show improvements is the area of interest or engagement with EU legislation. The qualitative feedback from each of the sites was that the public valued the opportunity to have input into the issues at a local level but showed no interest in the wider EU agenda (as can be evidence by the lack of take-up of JargonBuster).

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.feed-project.eu](http://www.feed-project.eu)

<sup>3</sup> See [www.eParticipate.eu](http://www.eParticipate.eu)

## **4. Evaluation type 2: eParticipation impacts – Democratic evaluation**

The project has a clear objective to activate Democratic Renewal and increased Citizen Engagement across Europe. This will be measured against the following target:

25% increase in citizen participation in local democratic activities & interactions especially with regards to council meetings attendance and consultation participation

This evaluation needs to be set against a back-drop of the site-specific objectives for each of the pilot sites rather than the overarching objectives described in the introduction. These are described below:

### **4.1 Bristol's objectives for their LEGESE microsite**

Bristol stated their objectives as being:

- To provide a simpler way for the Bristol public to engage on a single topic in one place
- To improve the marketing and take up of the webcasts, with particular attention paid to improving the use of the Bristol County Council's use of Public-i Player
- To create a link to their user focused community discussion board (Viewfinder)
- To use Viewfinder as a means of generating community support and feeling towards a particular topic.

### **4.2 Vysocina's objectives for the LEGESE microsite**

They stated their objectives as being:

- The primary objective was to provide a medium for the public to watch political representatives in case of citizens and to know more about legislative process on the EU level linked to the regional level in case of specialists
- To provide a simpler way for the public to engage on a particular topic
- To improve the marketing and take up of Vysocina's webcasts, by increasing the access to their Public-I Player page

### **4.3 Fingal's objectives for the LEGESE microsite**

Fingal's objectives are primarily to inform its citizens of developments associated with a major waste management project for the Dublin Region. The LEGESE site acts as a comprehensive point of contact for Fingal's customers to access information on:

- the proposed waste landfill site
- relevant Council meetings minutes and webcasts
- the statutory process involved
- the EU legislation which is the main driver for changing the way Ireland manages its waste.

The LEGESE site allows the Local Authority and its citizens to engage with and respond to the challenges of waste management and also to improve the marketing and take up of Fingal County Council’s webcasts, by increasing the access to their Public-i Player page.

#### 4.4 Data collection

As per the evaluation plan the different sites ran their own data collection exercise with relevant officers, politicians and members of the public. Specifically:

Pilot Site	Data Collection Methods
Bristol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi structured interviews with Select committee members (elected council members)</li> <li>• Semi structured interviews with relevant senior council officers involved with climate change, principally chief and senior officers from the Sustainable City Team</li> <li>• Semi structured interviews with officers from the council's Scrutiny Team ( a group of officers who support the select committee in their evidence gathering and deliberations</li> <li>• A e-survey of citizens who participated in the online discussions available through the LEGESE space. The response was 15% on a 40 person sample.</li> <li>• Semi structured interviews with the Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods and Involvement</li> <li>• An examination of the webcast viewing statistics</li> </ul>
Vysocina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to gain a balanced opinion from users, from a functional and democratic perspective, Vysocina surveyed a number of council employees as well as citizens and waste management specialists from municipalities.</li> <li>• First was the internal survey focused on the service evaluation - within this 3 people from the region were asked (one from ICT dept., one from the department of living environment and one from the regional council responsible for waste management.</li> <li>• The second part of the evaluation was to gather data around the democratic evaluation side of LEGESE. For this, a number of users of were asked their opinions of the service. These users were waste management specialists from municipalities in the region, as well as citizens.</li> </ul>
Fingal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the early stage of the project citizen feedback has not been gathered and the evaluation was carried out using officer interviews.</li> </ul>

A number of common themes were found in the evaluation:

#### Improvements in Transparency / Accessibility

As has been discussed in the previous section the single issue website approach has been very successful and has made it easier for citizens to access the information. The webcasting of content has also shown benefits in terms of transparency and accessibility:

*‘Webcasts were particularly important and members and officers recognised that more citizens can engage with the work of the council using such platforms’ Bristol*

*'Webcasted content and contextual information is extremely useful, and the single topic-related content could be a way of the future' (Vysocina Officer)*

*'Webcasts are changing the tone of committee meetings. The material used needs to be more accessible if the public are to access it ie move away from paper reports and more to presentational style' (Bristol)*

*'It's fabulous - makes it easy for busy working people to get a voice in local government - very much appreciated :-)' (Bristol Citizen)*

*'I valued being able to view the council meetings in my own time. I could revisit as I chose. Having background information in one place was very convenient. '(Bristol Citizen)*

### **Support for an existing democratic process**

The Bristol pilot was of particular interest in that it used the project in order to support an existing democratic process – the Select Committee. The results showed that all of the stakeholders saw the value of the addition of an online element to this process:

*'Platforms such as LEGESE could have an affect on the publics perception of the council (and others) response to the challenge. Also the adequacy of their response suggests that Select Committees has 'doubted credibility' with the public. Having the committee meetings webcast had a subtle effect on the discussions which could well improve credibility. Being watched is 'not a bad thing'. The dynamics of the meeting were not badly affected by the presence of webcast' Bristol Member*

Several officers said that the space and facilities were a 'good vehicle' for dynamic dialogue with the public (and staff) and not simply a place for passive involvement or casual interest. An important feature was having the capability for meaningful public dialogue on both 'understanding the challenge of climate change' and the council's (and others) response. Importantly, it allowed public access to related 'evidence' used by the Committee in its deliberations. It was suggested that sometimes Councils are less 'trusted' than community groups on topic based issues like climate change but that by offering a dialogue between citizen and council public perceptions of local authorities may be greatly improved. It was suggested that the presence of webcasting had subtly influenced the relationship between committee members and officers for the better.

*'The final committee report drew heavily on comment from the public obtained via online discussions available through the LEGESE space. This was greatly valued by the committee membership. The chair specifically commented on this in his forward to the report" Bristol Officer*

*Enabled the committee to 'feel that it is on track' and be aware of public views by 'broadening out' and tap into public opinion' Bristol member*

*'I really enjoyed looking the council meetings. I was impressed by the amount of ground they covered.' Bristol citizen*

*'Scrutiny were of the opinion that the LEGESE experience/space will influence the way in which the report recommendations are implemented as public opinion features so*

*prominently in the report'(Bristol)*

*'Confident that the learning gained from the experience will be applied to the way future Select Committees operate particularly reducing the seemingly bureaucratic style and taking full advantage of the 'new facilities' that are made available'(Bristol Member)*

**From Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Involvement**

*'Improving public engagement in the political processes is a key aim of all local authorities. This initiative is an excellent example of how citizens can become better informed and enabled to participate in the work of the council. The select committee listened to Citizen's views on climate change and used them in developing their recommendations for consideration by the cabinet. Such initiatives have a real place in the future development of local democracy.'*

Councillor Terry Cook

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Involvement *Bristol*

**Value of interactivity**

The interactive features were championed by the Bristol pilot. The LEGESE space and facilities were greatly valued by the Committee membership, in particular the online discussion forums and the webcasting. The online discussion attracted 146 comments which were summarised and presented at each of the 6 Select Committee meetings. Many comments were quoted verbatim in the Select Committee Report which drew heavily upon the online discussions which were used to support each recommendation. The Chair specifically commented on this in his forward to the report which is a good example of how informal online participation can be fed into an existing offline formal process.

*'Good Vehicle for dynamic dialogue with the public/staff and not simply passive involvement/interest' (Bristol)*

*'Let's wait and see if they really act on what they heard. It was good to have the opportunity to say what I wanted though.'* Bristol

**4.5 Conclusions**

The project's initial objective was a 25% increase in participation. If we take viewership of webcasts to be an act of participation and if we take the baseline to be previous attendance of meetings to be a reasonable baseline then the table below evidences that the project has easily achieved this baseline for the two sites which have run the length of the project.

Pilot Site	Physical meeting attendance	Webcast meeting attendance	% increase
Bristol	Maximum of 25	4023 over 6 meetings (670 per meeting)	Over 2500%!
Vysocina	Maximum of 25	1024 over 7 meetings (146 per meeting)	600% increase

This is not however a new finding as the eParticipate project has already shown how the webcasting of council meetings can increase participation<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.eparticipate.eu](http://www.eparticipate.eu)

Where the LEGESE project builds on this finding is around the focus that it has been able to give to a particular area of interest and also, with the Bristol pilot, how it has shown a clear path between participation in an online process feeding into an a formal offline democratic process.

## 5. Evaluation type 3: Process evaluation

Each of the 3 sites has a different process for managing the implementation of EP legislation. As part of the evaluation of the project the different processes need to be documented so that the project can identify common functional requirements.

### 5.1 Content planning of LEGESE sites

The first stage of the LEGESE set up process was to identify relevant experts within the host organisation in order to put together the content plan and background information. The content was then collated using a pre-defined data collection form which could then be automatically loaded up to the site.

All of the sites struggled with this approach with two common problems:

1. Issues with finding experts to work with
  - There was considerable time lost lobbying for experts' support for the project within the host organisations who were able to actually identify all of the content that would be relevant to the site. In many cases this highlights why this has not been done before – Local Government does not tend to organise its data around citizen centric issues.
2. Getting the experts to use the form once they had been found!
  - There was a lot of resistance from the experts in entering data actually into the XML form which had been devised for this purpose. The project team believe that this could be improved in the future if this process were completed on a regular basis but as a one off activity the overhead was too great.

### 5.2 Set-up and maintenance of LEGESE sites

The project team felt that though the sites were relatively straightforward there was too much reliance on Public-i for website management as a whole:

*There was too much reliance on Public-i for certain parts of site development process. This could potentially lead to bottlenecks of important alterations. (Vysocina officer)*

This is a problem which could be overcome with additional work on the content management system should the LEGESE sites move forward to an operational footing rather than the pilot state of these initial sites.

The reliance on content which has been created for other purposes also highlighted the need for more time to be spent on the actual project site. The team had assumed that the automated tagging of content from other sources would be sufficient but in fact it would have helped each of the sites to have some time spent on new content generation:

*Maintenance and upkeep of the site was simple, but would have benefited from a resource whose responsibility involved updating the site regularly. Owing to the lack of this resource, the site was not always up to date with the recent relevant information necessary. (Vysocina officer)*

*For Fingal County Council, the initial set up process was straightforward. Fingal County Council entered the project later than other partners incurred obvious problems, however, the set up was not too technical. There were some initial problems in getting the content for the site to the stage it is at, but these were overcome. (Fingal Officer)*

## 6. Evaluation type 4: Technical evaluation

The technical strand of the evaluation is aimed at:

- Ensuring that the system works reliably (software and hardware perform satisfactorily). A test plan was established as part of D1.3.2 and will be used to measure performance and acceptance by local users
- Ensuring that the LEGESE platform translates into the different regions both linguistically and culturally

In particular the evaluation looks at:

- Management issues with respect to a distributed production process.
- How much more sophisticated that process needs to be over and above the current Public-i operational production process.
- Scale-up of quality assurance measures foreseen.
- Identify required supply / supplier(s) for the scaled-up production process.
- Quantify the present and projected production capacity.

### 6.1 Ensuring the system works reliably

This subsection highlights the feedback gathered from all 3 sites to provide an overview of the reliability of the system. Each site had previously gathered feedback from their users:

### 6.2 Content management system

The core content management system was adequate to the requirements of the project but would benefit from additional work to make it a better fit for purpose. An example of the type of change required is seen below:

*Technology available for editing the site (CMS) not advanced enough. Did not allow the editor to alter the layout of content – static content takes up too large a space and dynamic content the opposite. (Vysocina Officer)*

### 6.3 Webcasting

All of the sites have been webcasting for some time now and the system continues to function well for this purpose. The additional tagging functionality which enables the user to tag pieces of core council content to appear on the LEGESE site worked well and is now being utilised to create other custom lists of webcast content.

## 6.4 XML Forms

The XML forms were the least used part of the project, and there are a number of reasons identified for this:

- The forms are probably too sophisticated in their functionality for the scope of the project. Most data collection requirements are very simple and the overhead of downloading the form filler in order to add data was too much for most users.
- Owing to the pilot status of the project, it was difficult to measure the benefits from the use of XML forms with such a small user-base. In a larger trial, the benefits should become clearer and more obvious.

## 6.5 Localisation

The LEGESE sites were built on the pre-existing eParticipate Webcasting Platform technology which was already localised and translated for each region. There were no additional issues with the extension of this to the LEGESE sites.

## 7. Evaluation type 5: Cost benefit analysis

A Cost benefit analysis was undertaken for each of the actors in the project:

- Local Authorities
- Citizen
- Business partners
- LEGESE

The cost benefit analysis looks at hidden costs, such as staff time, as well as more obvious costs such as equipment expenditure in order to make a thorough assessment of the projects impacts.

Cost benefit analysis in democratic process is a difficult area. Democracy overall is a cost and is not easily measured in an economic framework unless one starts to look at social capital measures and the like. That being said if we accept the need for the democratic expenditure the question then becomes whether we can make efficiencies and reduce costs through the use of technology.

Owing to the small data-set within this project this part of the evaluation was measured in the semi-structured interviews that were carried out. From these the following specific potential cost savings were identified:

- Time and travel savings for residents (i.e. can 'attend from home')
- Time and travel savings for Officers / Members (reduction in need to pay travel expenses)
- Recording of meetings. Ability for Officers to complete minutes during normal working hours
- Reduction in printed matter required to communicate with residents / officers / members
- Reduction in telephone costs to brief staff
- Meeting management efficiencies and hence reduction in overtime
- Potential reduction in legal costs through actual full record of event maintained
- Electronic storage of meetings reducing storage costs of meeting papers

### 7.1 Conclusion

Though all members of the project saw efficiency gains from the use of a single website for key issues there is no compelling cost benefit argument for LEGESE. This is however not uncommon for eDemocracy projects and should be considered as part of a wider discussion of the appropriate cost of democracy.

## 8. Evaluation type 6: Opportunities and Threats – SWOT Analysis

The main opportunity arising from the potential LEGESE eParticipation Deployment for the consortium and its members is the use of the ICT platform and services to grow democratic renewal and citizen engagement both in the public sector partners' local regions, and generally across Europe, and to provide a commercial return for the partners' investment and contribution to the project.

Initial risks in the deployment of LEGESE were identified and managed as detailed below:

Risk	Management
Lack of a credible Business/Deployment plan for all of Europe.	Addressed through the work of WP2.3 <sup>5</sup>
Reliance on 3 <sup>rd</sup> party suppliers e.g. hosting service, communications network providers etc.	This continues to be a risk which is managed through effective backup and portability of the service.
Substitute technology/ products may be developed	This has not been the case during the course of the project though competitor analysis would need to be an ongoing part of any business planning.
Inability to locate local distribution and suppliers	The eParticipate business partner network is available and could be utilised for further roll out
Big difference in detailed democratic processes make localisation more demanding	This risk was not realised as the different sites chose to work with the technology in different ways.
A rise in costs of hosting services or network provision	In reality to costs of service provision have actually dropped rather than increased.
Loss of vital staff	
Lack of funding in identified marketplace	This has not been tested but the single issue site (rather than the full LEGESE) is gathering interest in the marketplace and Public-i consider it to be commercially viable.

<sup>5</sup> See D2.3.2 "Final LEGESE Viability Plan for Sustainable Operation", Sep08.

The SWOT analysis below was carried out as part of the final evaluation and contributed to the deployment plan of the project:

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology solution is sound</li> <li>• Citizens respond to single issue website response</li> <li>• LEGESE site can be fed by other content sources</li> <li>• Cross department project which brings people together internally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant gap between local interests and EU legislation in terms of elapsed times makes this a bad vehicle for engaging people in the EU</li> <li>• Relies heavily on effective marketing – no viral opportunities</li> <li>• Reliance on Public-i / Lack of content ownership</li> <li>• Rigid template restricted design</li> </ul>
<b>THREATS</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology is not interactive Web 2.0 and will need to be updated for future implementations</li> <li>• Cross department nature means time to get buy in needs to be built into the project (inc. members!)</li> <li>• Cross department nature also means its more difficult to identify responsibilities for content / ownerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept of the single issue site is strong and should be applied in future projects</li> <li>• Scalability is there with the XML forms!</li> </ul>

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The LEGESE project has been an interesting one with mixed results. As a way of increasing participation it shows some strong results with evidence of an increased audience and positive feedback. That participation has continued however to be at the local level and so LEGESE cannot be said to have succeeded as a tool to engage citizens in the EU legislative process and the lack of impact of the JargonBuster tool. However this may be a feature of the time-span of the project which with 9 months of trials does not enable the Citizen to see the full impact of the legislation. It may be that by running these single issue sites over a longer period time it becomes possible to engage citizens which the much longer lifecycle of EU policy and legislation formation.

Where the project has been a success is in proving the value of single issue websites that pull together the full picture of activity around a particular topic and enable the public to interact with it. This is a simple and repeatable idea and has been a cornerstone of the Citizenscape<sup>6</sup> project which is following on from the LEGESE work.

The additional discussion board functionality at Bristol has also been shown to be a benefit and this finding has also been taken forward with the CitizenScape project.

The other useful finding has been the detailed study of how technology can be used to support a pre-existing democratic process – i.e. the Select Committee at Bristol. This provides a really practical case study as to how online informal activity can be fed into the formal decision making process.

All of these conclusions have been used to inform the project design for Citizenscape which is also being funded through the eParticipation Action. Citizenscape will create much more flexible single-issue websites which will have interactivity at their core rather than the information-based approach of LEGESE. Their will also be a far more active process of citizen engagement and marketing to ensure greater take-up and deliberation.

The mixed results of the project is perhaps best summed up by this comment from a Bristol Citizen:

*'Getting local people involved in local politics remains difficult. Such ideas as this help but there is much more to do.'*

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.citizenscape.org](http://www.citizenscape.org)