



evoice and eLoket at Groningen

In November 2004, the Municipality of Groningen (NL) started an award-winning electronic office window for e-services, called **eLoket**. From that moment on, citizens and entrepreneurs could inform themselves online on products and services of their municipality (see also **evoice** newsletter nr 3, available via www.evoice-eu.net, newsletters).



An essential part of **eLoket** is the **digital assistant**, which assists and supports the visitors to find their information online. It functions by means of chatting, a form of internet communication that is comparable to verbal interaction. The only difference is that one types instead of talking.

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The **digital assistant** to **eLoket** at Groningen is a special form of providing services: an efficient way of communication with a high added value. In fact, it was the start of **Stadnet**.

Stadnet and Chatfone: no wrong doors anymore

Just imagine: you want to add a garage or carport to your house. To find the appropriate information you visit the municipal website. At the electronic office window you'll find a lot of answers, but there may still be many open questions.



Therefore, you start an online chat with the responsible officer. He is able to answer some of your open questions, but for the last one you need information from the land registry and the regional authority. No problem. The officer simply redirects your call. Without leaving your chair you are being served promptly, by three organisations.

In **Stadnet**, the chat network of the City of Groningen, more than fifty (private) organisations, local and regional authorities, political parties, governmental institutions and entrepreneurs in and outside Groningen are interconnected by **Chatfone**: a new communication network being developed on the basis of internet technology: instant messaging, voip and webcasting.



Important advantages are:

- easy access, operation and controls
- no material investment in telecom infrastructure
- no call charges

The chat facility has also been added to the **community website Hoogkerk**, another award-winning **evoice** activity (see: www.evoice-eu.net, newsletter1 and 2).



Citizens of Hoogkerk now have the possibility to chat online with the municipality, the police and the Wijkvereniging Hoogkerk by clicking a special button on the community website.

evoice: rationale

Over recent decades interest in politics in the North Sea Region has dwindled to such an extent that the legitimacy of our elected leaders is being brought into question. Figures show that:

- fewer people are using their right to vote;
- membership of political parties has plummeted, and
- the choice of political representatives is narrowing as fewer people put themselves forward for election.

If these trends continue, the proper functioning of the democratic system could be endangered.

The **evoice** project is financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the framework of the **Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme** and contributions from the project partners.

for more information, visit:
www.evoice-eu.net

Bremen: chatting with mayor and senators

Sie sind herzlich eingeladen!

Haben Sie Fragen zu Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft? In unregelmäßigen Abständen laden wir Persönlichkeiten des bremischen Öffentlichen Lebens ein, mit Ihnen zu chatten. Dabei bleiben Sie als Fragesteller anonym. Es besteht aber keine Gewähr, dass ihre Frage im moderierten Chat gestellt wird.



Since February 2007, three members of the Bremen government:

- **Thomas Röwekamp**, mayor and senator for the interior and sports
- **Jörg Kastendiek**, senator for economics, harbours and cultural affairs
- **Ronald Mike Neumeyer**, senator for building, transport and the environment

are chatting with the Bremen citizens about bigger and smaller subjects chosen by the chatters.



The Markt at Bremen in a virtual world

A **chatiquette** is used to moderate the chats. Postings of the users are sorted to make discussing along threads of specific topics possible. After the chat session has been closed, the texts can be read on the **Bremen website**.

The tool for this chat facility has been developed within Bremens **evoice** pilot **Shared Online Platform for the Support of Citizens' participation**.

evoice: the multi media dialogue approach

The evoice project believes in the potential of modern ICT instruments and tools to increase citizens' participation and to access the administrative system, but only if they are employed in a well-structured, well-considered manner and over a longer period of time.

Therefore, evoice develops, tests and advocates the multi media dialogue approach: a combination of classic media (newspaper, radio, tv, phone, etc.) and the modern ones (internet, e-mail, chatroom, forum, sms, mms, etc.) in all phases of the policy cycle.

evoice aims to increase public influence and citizens' participation in political processes



internet access for the elderly

evoice: contact information

If you would like to get more information about the evoice project and its activities, please contact:

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For contact information on the project partners, visit the [who is who](#) on www.evoice-eu.net

evoice: m-tool library

To support local and regional authorities and (groups of) citizens to identify appropriate ways of online engagement in eDemocracy processes, the evoice project presents the **m-tool library**.



An assortment of m-tools are presented in short, structured fact sheets which consists of:

- general description
- scope of functionalities
- target groups
- advantages and disadvantages
- practical applications
- applications used in evoice pilots
- contact persons
- examples and additional information



For some of the m-tools, a more comprehensive description - including, e.g., criteria to choose the software or a web-hosting service - will be made available in a downloadable pdf document.

evoice: targets and aims

Despite the gloomy background described in the rationale, people are interested in single-issue politics. Building on this, evoice will combine traditional communication channels such as local newspapers with high-tech, innovative approaches to show people that they are also effected by general politics, and encourage them to participate.

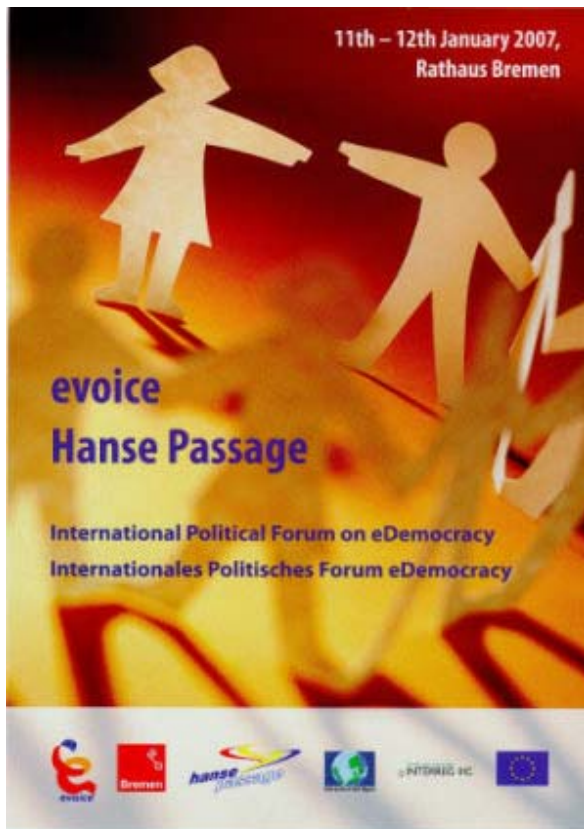
evoice takes into account local variations in legislation and regulations, culture, and the differences in style between administrators and politicians in different countries and regions.

evoice assumes that local and regional authorities are the appropriate organisations to work with to reach the evoice aims because of their direct links to the citizens.

International Political Forum on eDemocracy

In co-operation with **Hanse Passage**, an Interreg IIC project, and the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, **evoice** held its second **International Political Forum on eDemocracy** on Thursday, January 11th, and Friday, January 12th, 2007, in the historical Rathaus of Bremen (world heritage site).

Click here for [programme](#) and [flyer](#) with background information.



The next day, the *Weserkurier*, the regional newspaper at Bremen, published an article on its European page under the title **Elektronische Teilhabe für den Bürger der Zukunft**.

Some participants wrote about the forum in their blogs:

- **demos-monitor** (German)
Wie Demokratie schwimmen lernte
scroll down to January 15th via 'Ältere Artikel'
- **netzpolitik** (German)
Die Zukunft der elektronischen Demokratie
- **goldmundus** (Spanish)
Conferencia de eParticipación en Bremen

programme summary

The forum was opened by *Dr. Ulrich Nußbaum*, senator for finances of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen.



Dr. Ulrich Nußbaum (left) welcomes his Dutch colleague *Mr Jacques Wallage*, mayor of the City of Groningen, and one of the keynote speakers at the **International Political Forum on eDemocracy** on January 11th and 12th, 2007, at Bremen (FRG)

keynote speakers

- *Mr Jacques Wallage*
mayor of the City of Groningen, NL
- *Prof. Dr. Ann Macintosh*
Napier University, Edinburgh, UK
- *Mr Tom Steinberg*
director mySociety.org, London, UK

workshops

- youth participation
- councillors' dialogue with citizens
- freedom of information act

study tour

The participants visited three prominent locations of innovative civil participation projects at Bremen:

- Stephaniviertel
- Bremen Mitte/Östliche Vorstadt
- Stadtteil Tenever



Stadtteil Tenever, Bremen (FRG)

A summarizing article on the contents of the forum was published by Gesa Wessolowski (Bremen) in the newsletter of the **Innovative Actions Network for the Information Society IANIS** (February 2007).

evoice: international European partnership

evoice is a European co-operation between:

- the Municipality of Dantumadeel (NL), lead partner;
- the Municipalities of Uddevalla, Ale and Härryda with the support of Västra Götalandregionen (S);
- Norfolk County (UK);
- Intercommunale Leiedal, district Kortrijk (B);
- the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen (FRG);
- the Municipality of Groningen (NL).



Democracy and Interreg IV: new perspectives?

The **evoice** project within the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme will be rounded off in June 2008. In the three years since the approval in May 2004, and in the year still ahead, the **evoice** partnership has been, and will be, developing several innovative pilot projects on eDemocracy, mostly under the 'umbrella' **multi media dialogue approach**. Some appealing examples are:

- the multi media voting campaign *It's not about politics, it's about you* in Norfolk (UK);
- the interactive pilots *Stadion Bad* and *Stephaniquartier* at Bremen (FRG);
- the award-winning *e-services* at Groningen (NL);
- the first automated *document handling system* at Uddevalla (S);
- the innovative *mobile phones for youngsters* pilot at Zwaagwesteinde (NL);
- the *multi-channel and multi-level product catalogue* in Leiedal (B).

a new and future project on eDemocracy?

The **evoice** project will end next year, but the **rationale** is still strong and valid, now and in the years to come. Therefore, the project management investigates the possibilities and opportunities to set up a new transnational project on (interactive) eDemocracy, building on the results of the **evoice** project.

within new European perspectives?

The new Interreg IVB North Sea Programme, with its emphasis on (technological) innovation and innovative approaches, and accessible, sustainable and competitive communities, might be a good framework. But perhaps the new Interreg IVC programme offers even better opportunities.

interested?

At the moment several regions, municipalities and private companies from England, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Belgium, Poland and The Netherlands expressed their interest. ***If you are also interested, please contact the project management.***

democracy: subject of constant care!

Democracy needs continuous and constant attention, not only in election time, especially in a growing Europe.