



evoice: background

Interest in politics in the North Sea Region has dwindled to such an extent over recent decades 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 IIB North Sea Programme** and contributions from the project partners.

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

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evoice: award-winning British pilot project

To fight these gloomy developments, Norfolk County organised a multi-media campaign in May 2005 to raise the number of young voters with the slogan 'It's not about politics, it's about you'.

**Vote for
softer seats**

We care about the quality and reliability of public transport. Use your vote to show you do too.

Your key services like public transport and park & ride facilities are organised by the County Council.

And the County Council is controlled by YOU.

On May 5th, your vote could change your world.

It's not about politics ~~X~~ it's about you.

The debate is running on Vibe FM (105-108) or www.vibe105.co.uk



Nationally in the 2001 elections 39% of people aged 18 - 25 said they had voted in the general/local elections. After three weeks of the election campaign 'It's not about politics, it's about you' a Vibe FM poll on May 3rd, 2005, showed 60% of listeners intended to vote (the Vibe audience's main demographic is aged 15 - 35), and on May 6th another poll had 62% saying they actually had voted on May 5th, 2005.

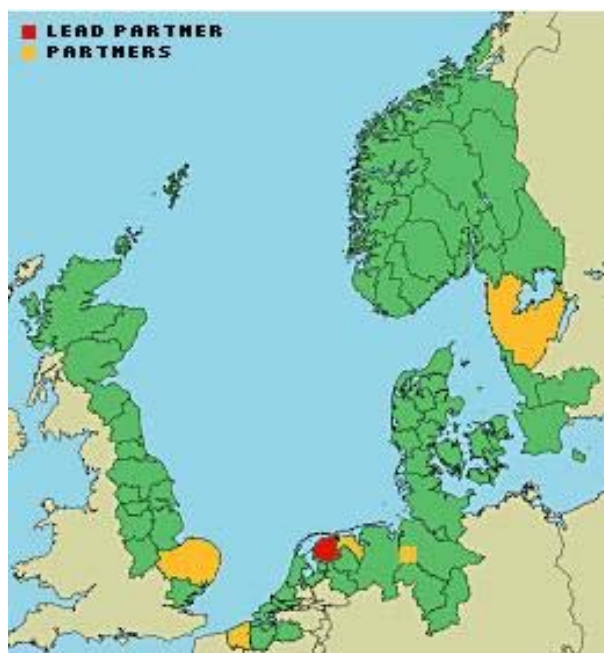


evoice: international partnership

evoice is a European co-operation between:

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

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.



source: Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme (the regions and not the locations are indicated)



evoice: targets and aims

Despite the gloomy background described on the first page, 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.



internet café for seniors at Zwaagwesteinde (NL)

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: the combination of the strengths of the 'old' media (newspapers, radio, television, (mobile) telephone, libraries, etc.) and the 'new' ones (internet, e-mail, electronic chatrooms and forums, sms, mms, etc.) in all phases of the policy cycle.



local democracy days in Sweden

The results of the multi-media approach will be described in a **user manual**. This will provide:

- guidelines and recommendations for setting up a multi-media dialogue approach;
- indicate suitable multi-media or M-tools (applications, techniques and protocols);
- describe best practice;
- give practical examples, and

offer suggestions as to which selection of means of communications is most appropriate for a specific situation.

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

for more information, also on the local pilot projects, visit: www.evoice-eu.net



mobile phones for youngsters at Zwaagwesteinde (NL)

evoice: international political forum

On September 15th, 2005, the **evoice** project held an **International Political Forum on e-democracy** for the project partners and politicians from the participating countries in the Martinikerk at Groningen (NL).



Speakers from the United Kingdom (Mary Reid, local councillor and chair of the local e-democracy national project in the UK), the USA (Stephen Clift, an international expert on e-democracy) and The Netherlands (Jacques Wallage, mayor of Groningen, Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, University of Twente at Enschede, and Peter Bijman, member of the Executive Board of the Province of Fryslân) presented their ideas about the threats, challenges and (possible) solutions for the representative, democratic systems in Western Europe.

for more information, click: [international political forum](#)



politicians discussing democracy at Groningen (NL)

evoice: community websites 1

The internet, and especially municipal websites, are important instruments for the contacts between the municipal administration and the citizens. Most of these municipal websites, however, provide only public information and e-services.

Within the **evoice** project a number of project partners (Groningen, NL; Bremen, FRG; Ale, S and Zwaagwesteinde, NL) are experimenting with a more interactive, more direct approach of their citizens at the level of a smaller community, for instance a village, a suburb, a district or a borough.

A characteristic of these **community websites** might be that public information (by the municipality, the police or social services) as well as components that are produced or edited by, or only accessible for members of the community involved, can be found there.

Interested citizens collect - for the whole community website or at least a part of it - the relevant information, write the articles concerning their neighbourhood, and answer the questions of their fellow-citizens.



In the **Municipality of Groningen** it is believed that the internet can play an important role in the exchange of information and interaction about general social and physical developments in the surroundings, services, information and planning, and interactive policy making by the local government. Therefore, the Municipality of Groningen created two community websites, one for the small village of Leegkerk (in co-operation with PURE, another project within the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme) and one for the (larger) district of Hoogkerk.

The **website of Leegkerk** is being used as an interactive platform for the development of spatial plans in this area. Several parties are involved (the municipality, the province, the water board, environmental organisations) and several interested groups (inhabitants, farmers, neighbours, holiday-makers).

The site offers background information for project planning, agendas for relevant meetings, and official project documents. Via this site an inquiry was held amongst the inhabitants, and there is a forum upon which several topics can be discussed.



The Municipality of Groningen has drawn up a covenant with the inhabitants of **Hoogkerk** to keep them informed about all policy making in the Hoogkerk area. The internet is going to play an important role in this process.



The aim is to create **an attractive and functional website**, which will be recognized and used by the Hoogkerkers, the municipality and other relevant parties for the exchange of information about:

- general social and physical developments;
- services, information, (spatial) plans and interactive policy making;
- communication about activities, decisions and opinions of the inhabitants of Hoogkerk.

For a description of the ideas behind the **Groningen concept of community websites**, click:

[evoice in Groningen: wijkwebsite Hoogkerk Nederlandse versie/Dutch version](#)

[evoice in Groningen: website of the Hoogkerk district English version](#)



The local broadcasting corporation will make **an independent district journal for Hoogkerk** at a weekly frequency.

evoice: community websites 2

People in Bremen's borough of Osterholz (FRG) can click on BORiS, the first citizen-edited community website. BORiS stands for (in German: Bürger Online Redaktionen in Stadtteilen; in English: citizens' online editorial group in boroughs). It provides both information regarding, for instance:

- politics;
- history;
- education;
- health,

and communication facilities to participate in the borough's development and in political and planning issues concerning the whole city of Bremen.



Bremen: Am Marktplatz with medieval townhall (world heritage site) and cathedral

A majority of questions that citizens might have regarding their city and borough can easily be answered by a simple click on Bremen's website: www.bremen.de. A huge database about tourist attractions (restaurants, event sites, city maps, clubs, etc.), societies, organisations, physicians, etc. is already existing on city level.



Osterholz/Tenever

Osterholz is a 30,000 people borough in the west of the city of Bremen with a skyline of large 20-floor blocks of flats, but also many one-family houses.



Osterholz/Osterholz

The other idea of the website is to use the internet as a platform of communication and as a local magazine.

The **BORiS/Osterholz community website** is prepared, produced and edited by citizens who are interested to get in contact with new ict technologies, to know more about local politics, and by those who have some time available and want to do voluntary work, to learn or to provide others with their knowledge.

Specific target groups to provide content are the borough's citizens' initiatives, self-help groups, local branches of the political parties, history groups, internet courses, schools, senior citizens, photography groups, etc.



The editorial group of 10 to 15 persons meets every month to discuss and prepare the community website. They elect a technical head who co-ordinates the work between the meetings. Additional meetings are scheduled every week to discuss articles and technical issues in more detail.

For a description of the ideas behind the **Bremen concept of community websites**, click:

BORiS Tries to Involve the Neighbours

Experiences of a Community Website in Bremen/Osterholz



evoice: community websites 3

Not only large municipalities like Bremen (FRG) or Groningen (NL) are experimenting with a variant of community websites. Also smaller communities like Ale in Sweden and Zwaagwesteinde in The Netherlands set up trials to involve their villagers more directly by an interactive approach.



ALE KOMMUN

Ale is a mid-sized, but growing Swedish municipality of about 26,000 inhabitants, situated close to Göteborg, Sweden's

second biggest city. It can be characterised both as a suburb (of Göteborg) and as a self-providing and independent community.

In Ale's vision, **the municipal website** should serve as a meeting point for the inhabitants and provide up-to-date information about everything, from schools to wastebins, from care for the elderly to roadside lights, from e-services to political information and discussion.



Ale's old tradition of open meetings where the local politicians discuss twice a year relevant matters directly with



the villagers, has now a modern version: dates, issues and protocols are presented on the website.

The **meetings of Ale Council** are

broadcasted by the local radio station and webcasted later on in an edited version. Finally, the **politicians** themselves are presented with their photo, phone number, e-mail and home address.

Ale is now working on a citizens' box for questions, complaints, compliments and ideas on how to make the interactive community website even better.

The **Municipality of Dantumadeel** (Province of Fryslân, NL), lead partner in the **evoice** project, develops the pilot



Heel het Dorp, a (spatial) plan for the future of the village of Zwaagwesteinde (5,000 inhabitants). The aim is to establish a professional, integrated and coherent vision in co-operation and consultation

with - if possible - all the villagers. In this framework, the municipality started two smaller, appealing multi-media initiatives:

- the mobile phones for youngsters, and
- the internet café of the elderly.

Interested youngsters received modern mobile phones (with photo facilities) on the condition that they will contribute to the development of **Heel het Dorp**, e.g. by sending photo's of situations that should be changed in their eyes.



Seniors are instructed how to use the internet in the internet café in their home for the elderly, or via set top boxes on their TV sets in their own rooms

The digital core is yet the **umbrella village website**, a community portal built, maintained and (re-)actualised together with the villagers. Especially the mobile phones for youngsters initiative attracted **a lot of media attention** (page 1,2 and 3) from the local, regional and national media in The Netherlands.

evoice: contact information

If you need more information about the **evoice** project or its activities, please contact:

Mr Jan Walburg (project manager)
Smaragdstoep 21, NL-9403 SE ASSEN,
The Netherlands
Tel.: 0031 592 406570/Fax: 0031 592 406055
E-mail: bureau.walburg@iaf.nl

For contact information of the project partners, visit **who is who** on www.evoice-eu.net