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Describing the REGNET CSC concept

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1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

This document provides a short introduction to the idea of the "Cultural Service Centre" that will function as the promoting and distributing organization of the REGNET services on a regional level through Europe.

Most of the information below has been taken from the REGNET contract or from the Interim Report 2.3.

2   Baseline Concept of the CSC as described in the REGNET contract

"The REGNET System will be an 'enabler' to set up an 'virtual enterprise' consisting of a network of service centres which are able to support also small and medium sized organisations especially located in regions where local (IT-) services in general are not available."

The REGNET Project will deliver a system which provides a service infrastructure (technical & legal framework) to **service centres supporting cultural institutions and industries**. The REGNET system offers a portal to different services like data entry, search and retrieval, and e-business. It can be accessed with mobile devices via de facto standard protocols (such as wireless application protocol ,WAP etc). The project is divided in an implementation and demonstration phase. Technical work is related to: content engineering, platform engineering and business engineering and based on emerging technologies like XML, and distributed search mechanisms based on Dublin Core metadata. Business processes involved in the area of publishing will be the basis for the implementation of a publishing system which enables small and medium organizations the generation of electronic publications. The demonstration phase is performed in four European regions.

The demonstration objectives of REGNET are:
· 	Test the technical (hardware/software) infrastructure of the REGNET system,
· 	Validate the developed services offered to end users and content providers,
· 	Test the operation of at least three Cultural Service Centres.

REGNET aims to set up a functional network of service centres in Europe which provides IT-services dedicated to Cultural Heritage organisations. It will integrate multi media industries enabling the production of electronic publications. REGNET will be an enabler of eBusiness activities for CH organizations. It will provide access and use of digital data (scientific and cultural) as well as of physical goods as provided by museum shops.

The achievements will be done on different levels:
Content providers:
· 	Will provide access (via wired and wireless communication) to their digital contents, services and products and offer them to their clients (B2C),
· 	Can use the REGNET facilities for multi media productions and data base management,
· 	Can cooperate with other partners during the creation of data bases, generation of multi media products or creation of a virtual exhibition (B2B).

Service Centre operators:
· 	Will generate income by providing the technical infrastructure (software/hardware) to content providers and other partners within the REGNET network,

·   Can offer additional IT-services and consultancies

System developers:
·   Will be able to sell the REGNET system to Cultural Service Centres and Content Providers,
·   Will have the possibility to implement additional components for the REGNET software system (additional 'nodes' like an 'exhibition creator', etc)
·   Will have income via licence fees for the REGNET system.

The end user of the system will be able to:
·   have easy and wide access to cultural data and services,
·   invoke the production of personalized goods (e.g. CDROM) and services,
·   do internet shopping.

In view of the large degree of dispersion of pieces of art within Europe and the highly fragmented knowledge and management of the collections, REGNET offers the services to create a global view based on a contextual and thematic approach. Further more the high level of accessibility combined with various levels of consultation of the information will suit the requirements of the occasional visitor, educational institutions and scientists/researchers. The different views of the same information will range from a quick referential search towards educational purposes.

The easy access and availability of this global information will boost the cross-cultural knowledge within European regions and stimulate Europeans to visit the objects in situ they discovered via the REGNET-service. This will substantially increase the culture stimuli of the citizen and at the same time contribute to a multicultural and more European awareness and feeling.

REGNET intends to reach some basic aims:
·   The dissemination of the European Culture Heritage facilitating to European citizens the access to catalogues of intellectual, cultural and scientific heritage stored in archives, libraries and museums and galleries
·   Integration of e-business into the information systems used in Cultural Institutions
·   The development of new and exploitation of existing cultural infrastructures
·   The use of standards in the field of information structure, retrieval and e-business
·   The interoperability between systems (interoperable access to distributed resources/catalogues: cultural & scientific content and products & services) based on the complementarities of the capabilities of each partner (group).
·   The establishment of a service infrastructure which allows to develop a network of (cultural) service centres throughout Europe.

The partners of the REGNET project are grouped in:

Group-1:   Content Providers: ONB, LMG, NRM, KVA, ALI, MECH, GRAN, MUS
Group-2:   Developers: SR, SI, CERT, VALT, TINC, MOT
Group-3:   Regional Poles: SUL, CC, IAT
Group-4:   Developers/Poles: AIT, IMAC, TARX, SPAC, ZEUS, ICCS

Members of group-4 have two roles combined. Regional Poles are providing the technical infrastructure to run a REGNET-System and the necessary coordinating facilities within a region and can be considered as 'nodes' of the REGNET-service network.

REGNET will set-up service infrastructure in 4 European regions with a potential of an extension into 2 additional regions. Due to the real European dimension of the REGNET partners this project has the potential to be the kernel of a fully functioning network of service centres in the field of Cultural Heritage. The partners are coming from following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria(Russia),

France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK. The regions which will be covered by a REGNET system are:

Region 1 - Middle and Northern Europe:
AIT, ONB (Austria), IMAC (Germany), SUL, LMG, NRM, KVA (Sweden)
Technical Infrastructure provided by AIT and IMAC
Coordination done by AIT and SUL

Region 2 - Western Europe:
TARX, MECH (Belgium), MUS (Netherlands)
Technical Infrastructure provided by TARX
Coordination done by TARX

Region 3 - Southern Europe-1:
SPAC, ALI, CC (Italy)
Technical Infrastructure provided by SPAC
Coordination done by CC

Region 4 - Southern Europe-2:
ZEUS, CERT, SI (Greece), IAT, GRAN, SIE (Spain)
Technical Infrastructure provided by ZEUS
Coordination done by ZEUS and IAT

The possible extensions are:

Region 5 - Southern Europe 3: (separation of Greece and Spain)
IAT, GRAN, SIE (Spain)
Technical Infrastructure provided by IAT
Coordination done by IAT

Region 6 - Eastern Europe:
ICCS (Bulgaria), SUSU (Russia; subcontractor to ICCS)
Technical Infrastructure provided by ICCS
Coordination done by ICCS

The service centres will offer the latest technical infrastructure and perform IT services dedicated for CH users and content providers; and store and deal with the cultural digital objects. This level is the general service/application provider to the REGNET users and customers. Their current work is done in networking manner by exchanging and performing tasks, originating from the REGNET servicing network.

3   More detailed information on the CSC concept (RN contract)

REGNET takes as baseline the concept of the CSC Austria which is a spin off of the MOSAIC Project.

This CSC is already established and called: "Enterprise for development and application of modern Information Technology as well as Information Networking in the Cultural Heritage domain."

It is "a non for profit enterprise (Verein) and its mission is targeted to support the improvement of existing data services of Austrian Archive, Libraries, and Museums or similar organisations by doing

research, support and development of innovative concepts, offering services and products in the field of digitisation, distribution, and networking of Cultural Heritage related data."
See: http://www.cscaustria.at/

The concept of a non-profit organization is estimated the most appropriate for this kind of service and service network cooperation envisaged.

The establishment of the regaional CSCs will in this regard be determined by the diverse national legislative requirements.

4   CSC Europe and regional CSCs

Research on the establishment of the REGNET legal and partnership framework mainly focussed on the adoption of an very open and flexible structure which would allow the cooperation of a wide variety of partner types (as museums, archives and libraries, cultural heritage professionals, research institutes, technology providers, independent committees etc.). At the end of the evaluation process it was found that the company model of the European Economic Interest Group, EEIG, would support such a specific type of light transnational cooperation that allows the partners to keep their legal and economic independence but nevertheless establish an independent legal entity with own legal capacity. The common activity of an EEIG should be mainly ancillary to its members and this is exactly in the spirit of REGNET.

The CSC Europe is intended to form the international platform for all CSCs already established or in the process of being established. In order to start the network at the earliest possible date the EEIG has already been founded with its seat in Graz in June 2002 by AIT, IMAC, TARX and CSC Austria (mainly the technical Region 1 and Region 2 partners). It is open for everybody from the project to join, and especially for every REGNET CSC that will be established. In a future step even only the CSCs might remain as full members of the CSC Europe EEIG. The legal framework of the CSC Europe EEIG is constituted by internal agreements and the CSC Europe EEIG statutes (the statutes can be found in the IR2.3 and D6).


Find below an excerpt of the CSC Europe EEIG contract (regarding the object of the EEIG):

§ 3.   OBJECT

(1) The primal target of the Cultural Service Centre Europe EEIG is to develop and promote a set of cultural service centres throughout Europe providing services dedicated to cultural heritage and related organisations. These centres will operate by networking their services, repositories and technical infrastructure. This aim will be reached by means of research, promotion and the development of new concepts, services and products for the digitisation, wide-spread circulation and establishment of cultural heritage networks.

(2) The purpose of the Cultural Service Centre Europe EEIG is to assist its Members in:

building and maintaining a distributed REGNET European Digital Library of multimedia resources documenting works of art and culture;

achieving a critical mass of digital or physical goods to be promoted through the REGNET portal;

enabling the trading services/products to be offered and sold on-line through its e-Business infrastructure.

(3) In addition, the Cultural Service Centre Europe EEIG may carry out any actions that serve directly and indirectly its purposes and/or those of its members. Its activities must, however, be linked to those of its members and the EEIG must act solely to support them. It is not the purpose of the EEIG to generate profit for its own ends.
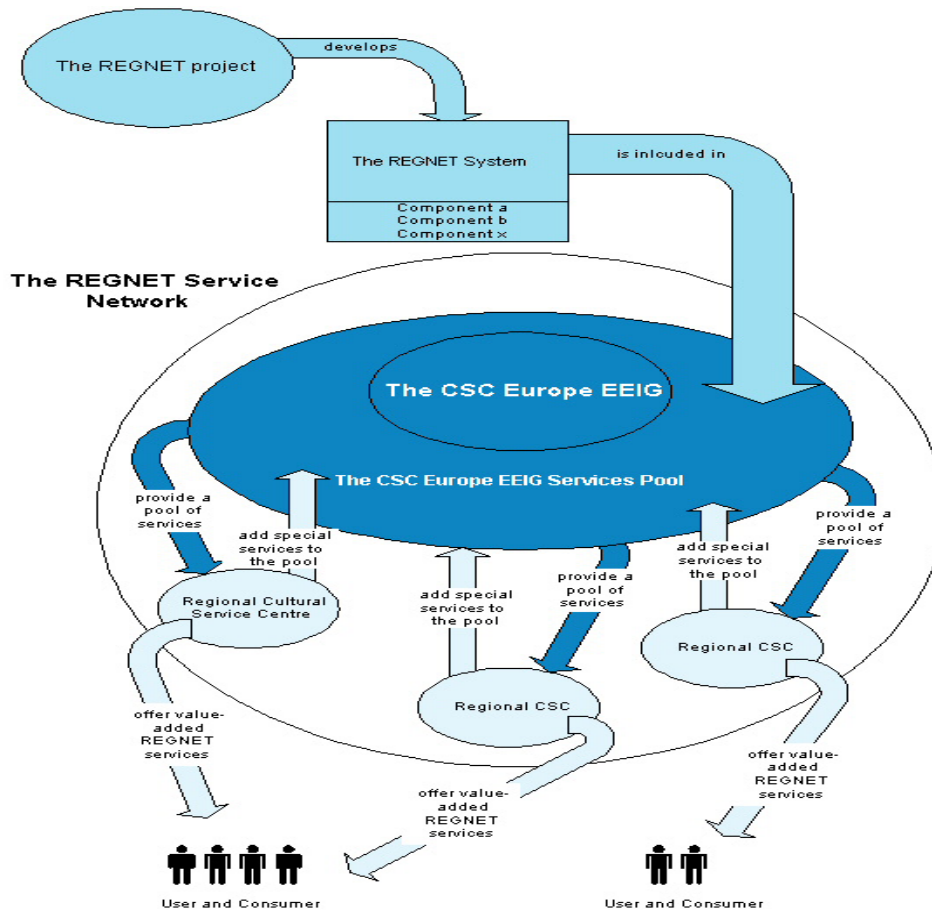
The figure shows the pool of services which will be generated through the cooperation of the different regional service centres with the CSC Europe EEIG and the input of the REGNET project. While the CSC Europe EEIG governs and further develops the REGNET system and provides it to the Service Centres, the Service Centres themselves contribute other value-added services not included in the basic REGNET System to the CSC Europe EEIG Services Pool. These services might be for instance special knowledge in watermarking, theme-based research, digitalizing or other. Being member of the CSC Europe EEIG each Service Centre can profit from this wide variety of services which otherwise would be impossible to offer.