

## Deliverable 1.4 Final Leveraging Centres Handbook

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# 1 Executive Summary

E-commerce is currently entering all sectors of economy, and its development is key to the evolution of European economy within the global market. However, as in many other aspects of economy, a clear unbalance is turning up between the most developed economies of the continent and the least favoured regions of Europe. In the e-MINDER project three so-called Leveraging Centres have been set up to promote and empower e-commerce in Cyprus, Galicia (Spain) and Pomerania (Poland). This will enable these regions to benefit from the new economy. These Leveraging Centres operate in a network, in order to learn from each other's experiences.

Each Leveraging Centre is built around 4 modules.

1. An Observatory module assesses the current regional economy and e-economy in order to discover local specificities, strong and weak points, and local priorities with special attention to SMEs. In the reverse way, the Observatory makes the latest information about ICT and e-Commerce available for the regional community.
2. An Education and Training module offers knowledge to SME staff and general information to citizens. Courses begin with basic Internet concepts like for instance: "What is B2B?" and continue with more sophisticated questions like "e-Procurement legal framework". Basic and advanced courses are tailored to take into account a very large variety of the SMEs.
3. A Demonstration module provides consultancy and advice on the technologies available for e-Commerce, and demonstration of its services (i.e. platform services) for SMEs facing concrete reorganisation problems and looking for practical solutions. An on-line helpdesk answers the most current questions and identifies the most appropriate actions. Already successful experiences are analysed and presented for the benefit of the regional community.
4. A Communication module ensures the visibility of the Leveraging Centre in the region and drives all necessary actions to reach as many local enterprises as



possible. It also makes the e-MINDER experience available for the European enterprises and policy maker communities.

Because of the successful operation of these centres during the two years that the project is running, it is foreseen that other regions will follow their example and will also set up a Leveraging Centre (LC) and become part of the e-MINDER network. In this document it is described what a LC should do in order to stimulate e-commerce in its region, based on the lessons learned during the project.

## 2 Introduction

E-commerce is currently entering all sectors of economy, and its development is key to the evolution of European economy within the global market. However, as in many other aspects of economy, a clear unbalance is turning up between the most developed economies of the continent and the least favoured regions of Europe. In the e-MINDER project three so-called Leveraging Centres have been set up to promote and empower e-commerce in Cyprus, Galicia (Spain) and Pomerania (Poland), so that these regions can also benefit from the new economy. These Leveraging Centres operate in a network, in order to learn from each other's experiences. Because of the successful operation of these centres during the two years that the project is running, it is foreseen that other regions will follow their example and will also set up a Leveraging Centre (LC) and become part of the e-MINDER network. In order to facilitate this process, e-MINDER has produced a handbook designed as a very practical tool aimed to ensure the fast and successful implementation of new Leveraging Centres in the new participating regions. The e-MINDER handbook includes:

- The definition of useful concepts and a list of questions that the Leveraging Centre promoters have to sort out during the inception stage of the project.
- Guidelines explaining how to successfully implement a Leveraging Centre.
- Examples and documents extracted from the existing Leveraging Centres documentation.

It is important to note that the e-MINDER methodology provides a framework common to the whole network. But, the implementation of each Leveraging Centre (LC) should be adapted to the specific regional context. One LC could for instance be focused on awareness and training activities whereas another one is structured around consulting and support actions. The method is the same but the implementation depends on the regional context and the identified priorities.

### **3 How does a Leveraging Centre operate?**

A Leveraging Centre is defined as a non-profit or profit organization whose main objective is to develop specific actions that will stimulate the use of e-commerce by SMEs and citizens in a region in such a way that the economic situation of the region improves. Figure 1 shows the generic model of operation of a Leveraging Centre.

The main reason for selecting this model is the fact that its approach towards e-commerce is functional and dynamic and that the Leveraging Centre's structure is flexible enough to fit the variations in a region both coming from the external environment and from the new circumstances created by the operation of the Leveraging Centre.

The proposed model as shown in Figure 1 comprises three sections, which are analysed below.

## Leveraging Centre - Generic model of operation

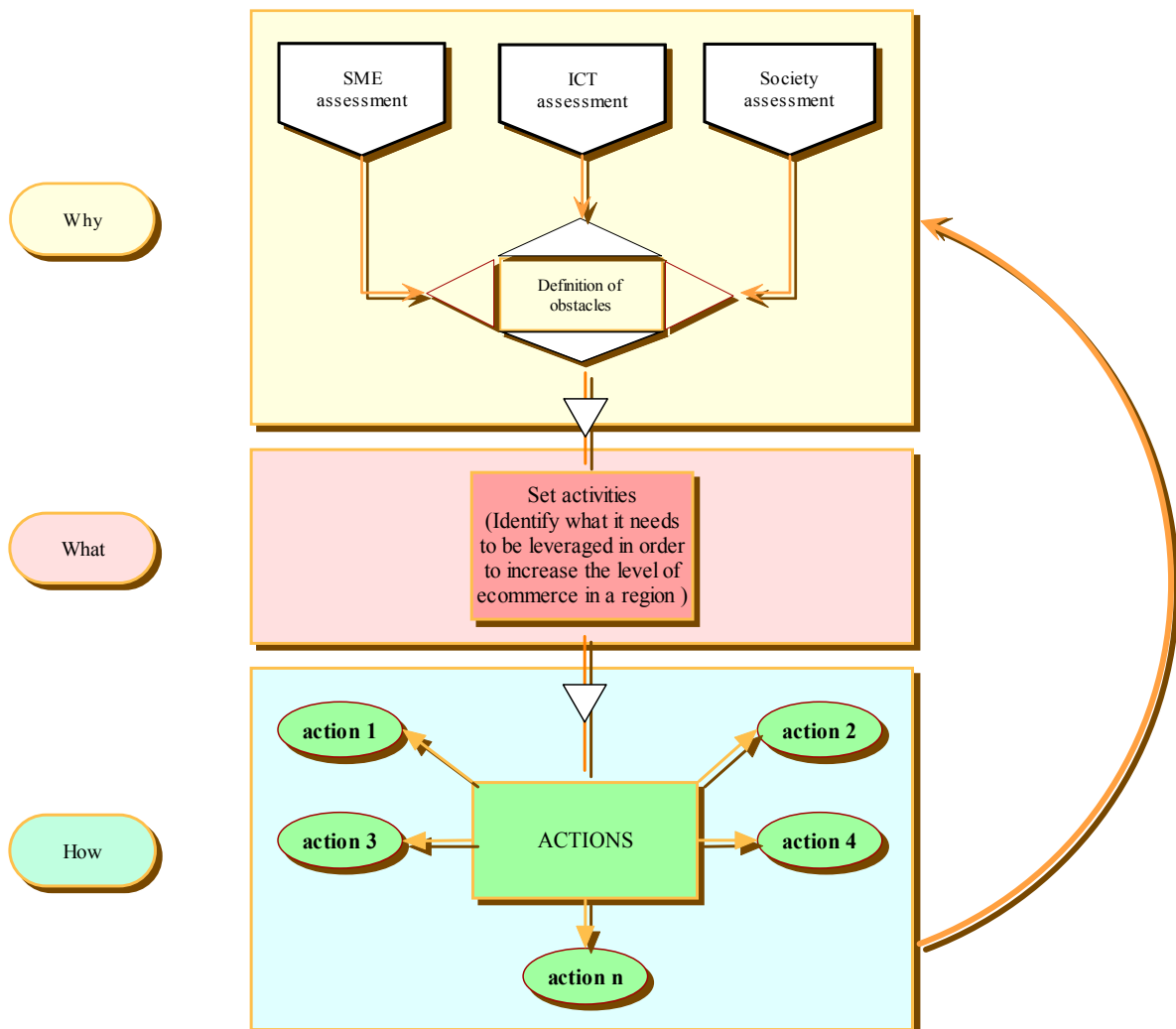


Figure 1 - Generic Model of Levering Centre Operation

### 3.1 Why

Every Leveraging Centre should first investigate WHY e-commerce is not exploited in a certain region. They should identify the barriers hampering the development of e-commerce. Possible barriers are for example:

- SMEs don't know the opportunities offered by e-commerce
- there is a lack of infrastructure that is necessary to start e-commerce activities
- there is a lack of trust and confidence between sellers and buyers to have on-line transactions

Once there is a clear picture of why e-commerce is not sufficiently developed in the region, it is possible to define actions that will overcome the problems. This is the “WHAT” of the model of operation of a LC.

### **3.2 What**

After investigating why there is a lack of e-commerce in a region, a LC will analyse WHAT needs to be leveraged in order to increase the level of e-commerce in a region. For instance, if the SMEs are not sufficiently aware of the possibilities of e-commerce, they need to be trained to understand what e-commerce can mean for their company, and how they can invest in a sensible way in order to profit from e-commerce. The LC will identify a number of activities that have to be carried out in parallel in order to diminish the obstacles.

### **3.3 How**

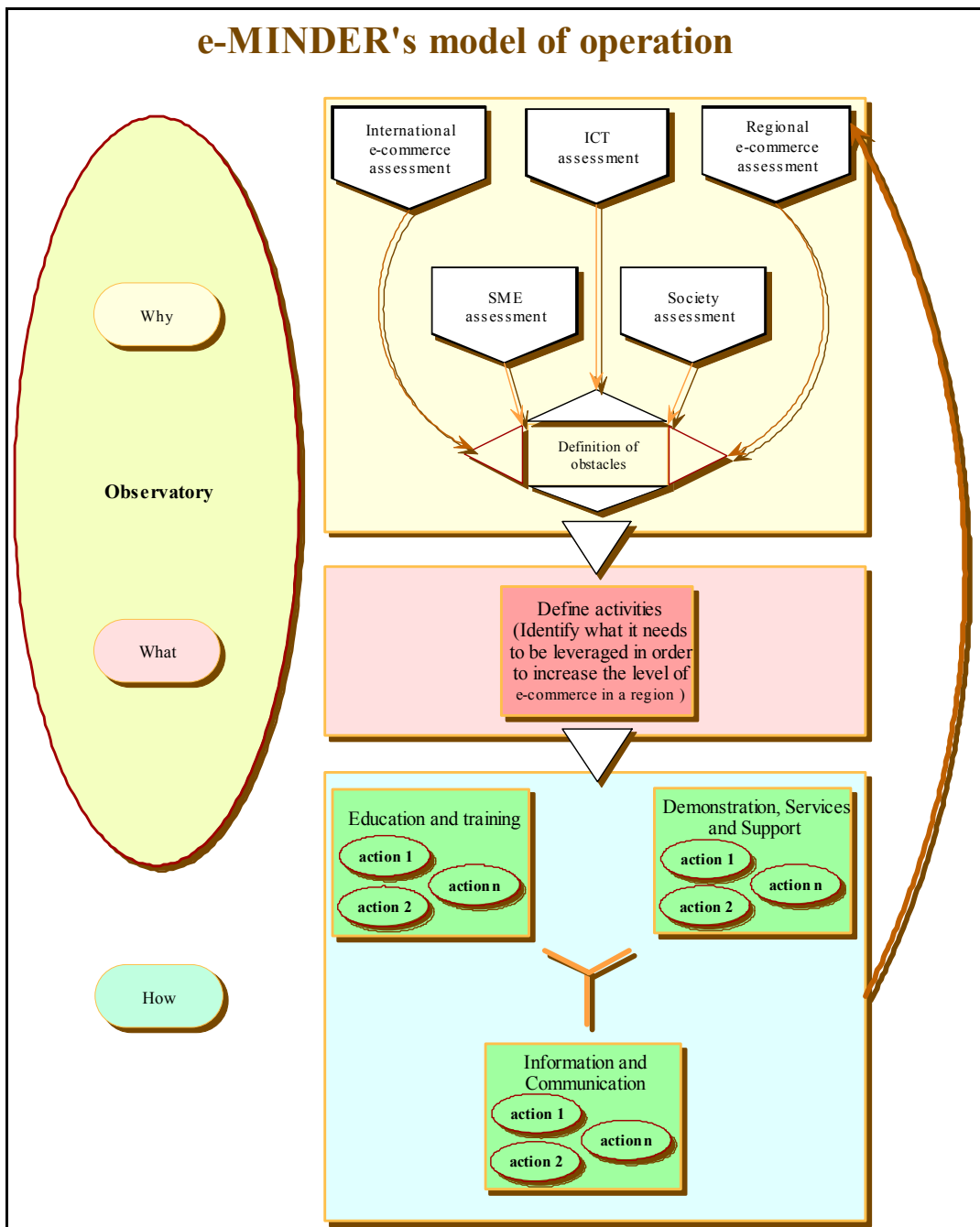
The final section of the model is concerned with HOW to best implement the activities identified as the WHAT. Taking again the example of the training, it might be decided by the LC that the best way to train the SMEs is to organise courses in all the main cities of the regions.

## 4 e-MINDER Levering Centre Model of operation

The e-MINDER LC's implement the generic model of operation by means of four interdependent modules. This is graphically depicted in Figure 2.

1. An Observatory module implements the WHY and WHAT. It assesses the current regional economy and e-economy in order to discover local specificities, strong and weak points, and local priorities with special attention to SMEs. Additionally, the Observatory makes the latest information about ICT and e-commerce available for the regional community.
2. An Education and Training module offers knowledge to SME staff and general information to citizens. Courses begin with basic Internet concepts like for instance: "What is B2B?" and continue with more sophisticated questions like "e-Procurement legal framework". Basic and advanced courses are tailored to take into account the large variety among the SMEs.
3. A Demonstration module provides consultancy and advice on the technologies available for e-Commerce, and demonstration of its services (i.e. platform services) for SMEs facing concrete reorganisation problems and looking for practical solutions. An on-line helpdesk is available for answering specific questions of the SMEs and the citizens. Already successful experiences are analysed and presented for the benefit of the regional community.
4. A Communication module ensures the visibility of the Leveraging Centre in the region and drives all necessary actions to reach as many local enterprises as possible. It also makes the e-MINDER experience available for the European enterprises and policy maker communities.

The Education and Training, Demonstration and Communication module implement together the HOW.



**Figure 2 - e-MINDER's model of operation**

## 4.1 Observatory

The Observatory is a very important module of the LC. It implements the “Why” and “What”. Its main task is to monitor and assess the overall environment of the region in terms of socio-economic and technological issues and trends. Based on this, it defines the activities and actions needed. This ongoing function of the observatory is basically the cornerstone of the LC since it finds, assigns and reassigns the actions to the other

modules. Of course, the feedback obtained from the other three modules will also influence the assessments of the Observatory. The main activities of the Observatory are listed below.

- Assessment of the current situation in the region by means of surveys with the main stakeholders (i.e. SMEs, citizens and policy makers)
- Technology watch: A continuous analysis of the state of the art of technologies applicable for e-Commerce
- Identification of possible areas of innovation for the SMEs in the region.
- Monitoring and observation of e-Commerce policies and initiatives from which SMEs could benefit in relation to electronic commerce.
- Assessment of the performance of each individual activity and initiative carried out by the LC.

As an example we see the obstacles identified by the Observatories of Cyprus, Pomerania and Galicia, together with the actions that can leverage the problems.

Obstacles / Constraints that prevent the adoption of e-commerce	Activities defined in order to leverage these obstacles
<b>Cyprus</b>	
Lack of confidence and trust in performing transactions on-line	Specific training was developed explaining the security implications of on-line transactions. For the sellers, the use of firewall, web filtering and anti-virus techniques was explained. For the buyers, suggestions were provided on how to use credit cards on-line. A number of dissemination activities were also provided to leverage these constraints
Non – availability of the appropriate payment infrastructure for a secure and technically stable payment on-line.	Make the Planning Bureau of the Government of Cyprus and the only credit card clearance agency in Cyprus (JCC) aware of the problem and suggest possible solutions to the problem.
Lack of a regulatory and legal framework for e-commerce and Internet usage in general	Work closely with the Government of Cyprus during the formulation of a national strategy for e-commerce and legal framework.
Lack of e-commerce awareness and education	Provide a number of Internet and e-Commerce awareness and advance seminars.
Most of the SMEs do not have in place the appropriate procedures and infrastructure to allow them to invest and implement an e-commerce environment	Implement a virtual mall providing a number of SMEs with a zero investment platform to exploit e-commerce
High percentage of small (micro) companies in Cyprus	N/A

<b>Pomerania</b>	
<p>In non-urban areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of financial and technical resources for establishing one's own economic activity</li> <li>▪ Lack of the possibility of using a computer and the Internet in the company and at home.</li> </ul>	<p>The LC cannot solve these basic problems related to lack of money. However, the LC can provide training, so that when enough funds become available for families and companies to buy computers and for companies to start economic activities, they can directly make the most of it. Therefore the LC has developed training for the inhabitants of non-urban areas, consisting of providing practical knowledge and skills for using the Internet and available services (such as e-banking, e -purchase or e-service of government and press editors). Also establishing one's own website and use of electronic mail was trained.</p>
<p>In urban areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ lack of essential knowledge for using the Internet in the company (in smaller towns),</li> <li>▪ lack of accessibility to telecommunication links in smaller towns,</li> <li>▪ lack of companies offering services connected with the Internet use in SMEs (in smaller towns),</li> <li>▪ lack of financial resources in Gdansk (big city),</li> <li>▪ Companies do not offer internet access to their employees</li> <li>▪ lack of knowledge about e-commerce</li> </ul>	<p>Provide training and support for SMEs. Basic and more advanced courses were prepared so that all inhabitants can find a course according to their interests and needs.</p> <p>The basic training presents the advantages of the use of e-commerce and provides basic information on the Internet and e-mail.</p> <p>The advanced training consists of lectures and practical workshops on the use of e-commerce and the Internet and how to fully exploit the possibilities they offer. The participants' knowledge and skills are developed in a systematic way from basic to more advanced.</p> <p>Provide support for SMEs and inhabitants of the Region through a Helpdesk where persons interested in e-commerce can obtain professional information and advice on how to solve their problems or how to develop activities aiming at becoming e-enabled.</p> <p>Prepare tools and services required for conducting training and providing support dedicated to SMEs and public administration</p>
<p>Regarding the use of the Internet by SMEs in their contacts with administration offices several obstacles are observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ lack of trust in the effectiveness of processing matters by e-mail,</li> <li>▪ lack of formal procedures of processing essential matters via the Internet and necessity of a personal visit in the administration office,</li> <li>▪ administration offices do not always reply to enquiries and issues sent by e-mail.</li> <li>▪ Low level of awareness among the administration of the importance of becoming e-enabled</li> </ul>	<p>A tool enabling communication between citizens/SMEs and administration should be provided and the public administration workers should be trained in its practical use and exploitation for the communication.</p> <p>Organise conferences, seminars, presentations during which advantages resulting from being e-enabled are presented.</p> <p>Participate in conferences, seminars and meetings organised by other institutions involved in supporting SMEs and present the advantages resulting from being e-enabled.</p> <p>Publish LC's own magazine and distribute it among SMEs, associations of SMEs and institutions supporting SMEs as well as among public administration representatives.</p>

<b>Galicia</b>	
Lack of confidence in electronic transactions.	<p>Device training courses, presentations and articles in the LC magazine explaining the real security implications of e-commerce</p> <p>Participate in a project that will research and develop a new payment gateway for the regional and local government and some public enterprises.</p>
Lack of internet and e-commerce education and awareness in the SMEs.	<p>Use workshops and training courses to show to the local entrepreneurs the new possibilities e-commerce may bring to their business.</p> <p>Use a bus with internet connection that is travelling around the most important Galician rural areas in order to give courses about e-commerce and reach even SMEs in remote areas.</p>
Lack of e-commerce regulatory and legal framework.	Recently the Spanish government approved the Information Society and Services and e-Commerce Law, that comply with the European Directive. The dissemination actions should provide information about this new legal framework.
Lack of logistics infrastructure.	Due to the great dispersion of rural areas, there are some problems with the communication infrastructures (internet, telephone and roads). The Galician LC wants to investigate whether logistic problems can be optimised using GIS and GPS technologies.

The next three modules together implement the “How” section of the generic operations model. Each action identified by the Observatory are assigned to one of these modules.

## **4.2 Education and Training**

Education and training provide an indispensable tool for Leveraging Centres. Training (which consists of short courses providing knowledge about a set of concrete issues) can be used to solve problems related to little awareness or wrong perception of certain e-commerce aspects.

To understand which training should be offered, the barriers identified in the observatory module are of course used. The task of the Education and Training module is to develop the courses (or to identify already existing material) and to make this training available for SMEs and citizens in the region. On the other hand, education is important for supporting a longer term strategy where all citizens in the region learn about the principles of ICT and how ICT may be used in daily life or for business. Therefore another task of the

Education and Training module is to study the curriculum of secondary level education and to make suggestions for improvement.

The key aspects of the training courses are:

- to make participants interested in active use of the Internet,
- to make them aware that even small changes in the business process using some of the possibilities of the internet may bring savings or additional income.

We distinguish the following training units:

1) Basic e-commerce training for SMEs, presenting the advantages of the use of e-commerce and providing basic information on the Internet and e-mail.

- electronic mail
- Internet in the company
- a company on the Internet,
- data security,
- electronic signature,
- e-commerce solutions

2) Advanced e-commerce training for SMEs, explaining the following topics:

- Electronic banking
- How to develop a web site
- How to make a business process more efficient and obtain more benefits
- Electronic signature
- Administration Office via the Internet
- Elements of Marketing and advertising using the Internet
- Adaptation of the SME sector to standards and competitiveness in European Union
- Electronic customer service
- Basics of e-economy

Basic internet training for citizens presenting the advantages of e-commerce and possibilities of its use in non-urban areas. It contains the following topics:

- What is the Internet? – a practical course and elements of computer use,
- Electronic mail and advanced methods of communication via the Internet.

Advanced training for citizens, consisting of the following topics:

- Purchasing on the Internet,
- Elements of electronic banking,
- Creation of one’s own website

Basic Internet training for public administrations, explaining how a content management system may be used for efficient communication with citizens through the internet.

It is of course important to constantly evaluate the quality of the provided training. Therefore, each participant to a course has to answer a questionnaire, with the following objectives:

- to check the participants’ satisfaction about the presented subjects,
- to find out the participants’ evaluation of the usability of the acquired knowledge,
- to find out whether the participants were satisfied with the lecturer’s knowledge and skills,
- to find out the vocational background of the participants and their present employment characteristics.

We will now show examples of activities carried out by the education and training module of the Leveraging Centres in Cyprus, Pomerania and Galicia.

Activities assigned by the Observatory	Actions taken
<b>Cyprus</b>	
<p>The research performed identified the need for the creation and provision of seminars in the subjects of Internet Awareness Training e-Commerce Training</p> <p>All courses provided emphasis in mitigating the constraints identified and in particular confidence, trust and security related matters</p>	<p>Basic internet training was created and provided to 468 participants in Cyprus through 56 training sessions.</p> <p>Advanced e-commerce training was created and advertised through mail and e-mail shots to over 3.000 recipients. More than 25 seminars were provided with more than 350 participants.</p>

<b>Pomerania</b>	
<p>Provide free training for SMEs, administration workers and inhabitants of non urban areas.</p> <p>Prepare tools and services required for conducting training dedicated to SMEs and public administration.</p>	<p>Prepared tools and services were used during the training.</p> <p>The Internet page was established and it contained: the information on training (subject, date, time) forms for training evaluation discussion forum content of training and educational material.</p> <p><b>Training for SMEs</b> was conducted in the following ways:            Basic training was conducted in Gdansk, Puck, Malbork, Nowy Dwor Gdanski, Tczew, Lebork, Starogard Gdanski, Kwidzyn; it was 5 hours long. the advanced training was conducted in Gdansk, Slupsk and Czluchow; the training was for inhabitants of these towns and surrounding areas; it was 42 hours long. In total 444 SMEs were trained, the number of people attending the courses was 682. (140 from Slupsk, 59 from Czluchow , 323 from Gdansk, 40 from Malbork, 20 from each of the towns: Nowy Dwor Gdanski, Tczew, Lebork, Starogard Gdanski, Kwidzyn and Puck).            The basic training was conducted in the form of a lecture, a best practice presentation (an example of a company that successfully implemented the Internet in its business activity) and a presentation of an internet provider. In addition to this, the advanced training also offered the possibility for obtaining hands-on experience.            The majority of participants of advanced training were company employees and company owners; the unemployed, pupils and students participated in training as well.</p> <p>The <b>training for inhabitants of non-urban areas</b> was conducted in two villages Lichnowy and Borety in the community of Lichnowy; it was -14 hours long, and it consisted of a lecture and a workshop. In total 63 persons were trained. The participants consisted of unemployed people, pupils, company employees, teachers, farmers and Commune Office workers;</p> <p>The <b>training for public administration</b> was conducted in 56 administration units in 47 towns; it was 3 hours long, and consisted of a lecture and a workshop. 701 administrative workers were trained.</p>
<p>Certify the acquired knowledge and participation in the training by conducting exams and handing certificates.</p>	<p>The advanced training for SMEs on e-commerce finished in June 2003 with an exam and certificates were handed out by a positive result of the exam. Reception of a certificate of participation in the citizen training required a participation in more than 50% of the sessions.</p> <p>Totally 227 certificates were handed in towns and 63 in non-urban areas, including 172 certifying the</p>

	<p>completion of training with the exam and 118 without the exam.</p> <p>Certificates were not handed to the participants of the basic training for SMEs or for the administration training.</p>
<b>Galicia</b>	
<p>Provide training courses in order to improve the SMEs level of education and awareness in internet and e-Commerce , oriented to business.</p>	<p>The courses have been imparted in the Galician 7 biggest cities (2 courses in each city) with the collaboration of the University of A Coruña, resulting in 676 trained SMEs and a total of 848 Courses inscriptions.</p> <p>Regional Development Agencies, Financial Institutions, Chambers of Commerce and other trade organisations have supported the organisation of this training programme. In addition to this there have been other formation activities.</p> <p>Several seminars, workshops, and conferences have also been organised by the Galician Leveraging Centre in collaboration with other institutions</p> <p>The LC organised 13 workshops and seminars with a total of 1140 attendants and 7 conferences with 123 attendants</p>

### 4.3 Demonstration, Services and Support

The aim of this function is twofold, firstly to explain in practical terms how a business can become e-enabled and what are the opportunities of such a change and secondly, support this business through phone or over the web. The activities of this module include, but are not limited to:

- Demonstration of e-Commerce applications based on e-Commerce models;
- Providing of information, orientation, assistance and advisory services to businesses in the region;
- Providing support on any of the services and solutions as well as on the demonstration that is being offered via the Leveraging Centre.
- Providing consulting services to SMEs as to the re-engineering of their infrastructure and procedures to accommodate an e-Commerce channel. The services included Feasibility studies and e-Commerce Audit.

- In the following table we see the actions taken in the context of this module by each of the three Leveraging Centres.

Activities assigned by the Observatory	Actions taken
<b>Cyprus</b>	
Support SMEs of the island in technology know-how matters in relation with e-commerce	Creation of a Virtual Mall in order to undertake the responsibility of technology know-how and leverage the cost of a small company to be e-enabled.
Support SMEs in e-commerce issues because of lack of in-house expertise	Provide a national Help Desk telephone hot line, e-mail and website for supporting Citizens and SMEs
Leverage the cost of SMEs for the setting-up of e-shops	Perform site visits to interested SMEs and depending on their e-Commerce status provide a feasibility study or audit of their current e-commerce facilities.
<b>Pomerania</b>	
Provide consultancy, advice and IT services addressing the real needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and public administration units in the Region,	A Helpdesk was established in the LC. SMEs looking for information could make a personal visit to the helpdesk, located in the centre of Gdansk (Dlugi Targ 1/7). Also they could phone (no 48 58 307 7555) or e-mail ( <a href="mailto:eminder@e-minder.pl">eminder@e-minder.pl</a> ) in order to get answers to their questions. In addition to this, an Internet portal was developed with information needed for the business activity for entrepreneurs ( <a href="http://www.e-pomorskie.pl">www.e-pomorskie.pl</a> ). This was really useful. Having all data in one place convinced SMEs to use the Internet and to make them interested in further actions.
Support SMEs and administration units in establishing or enhancing their present e-activities (such as defining and organizing their activities online – marketing and e-commerce).	<p>Constant co-operation with the owners and representatives of a selected group of SMEs and state administrations in order to understand their needs regarding ICT and e-commerce. This work resulted, among others, in:</p> <p>The development of advanced tools for managing the offers of a Travel Agency “Esmeralda” (<a href="http://www.esmeralda.gdansk.pl">www.esmeralda.gdansk.pl</a>)</p> <p>Reconstruction of an existing service of the Association “Tourist Stegna” (<a href="http://www.stegna.com">www.stegna.com</a>).</p> <p>Creation of the website for the Municipality Office of Starogard (<a href="http://www.starogard.pl">www.starogard.pl</a>), Municipality and Commune Office of Sztum (<a href="http://www.sztum.pl">www.sztum.pl</a>), Inspectorate of Historical Monuments Protection in Gdańsk (<a href="http://www.ochronazabytkow.gdansk.pl">www.ochronazabytkow.gdansk.pl</a>)</p> <p>Consultancy and expert’s evaluation for the Accountancy and IT Services Office “WIG”</p> <p>Consultancy for the Municipality Office of Sopot, Municipality Office of Ustka, Medical Academy in Gdańsk</p> <p>Assisting in the selection of an internet service provider for a broker company</p> <p>Demonstrations of e-commerce solutions for teachers in the secondary school No 2 in Sopot</p>

	<p>PSI – Common Internet Shop – an example can be an Internet shop with female underwear that is a development of a conducted in a traditional way trade activity (<a href="http://www.magiabelizny.pl">www.magiabelizny.pl</a>)</p> <p>CMS – Information System for Administration was prepared and implemented in 56 administration offices around the Pomeranian Region.</p>
<b>Galicja</b>	
<p>To provide information, assistance and advisory services to SMEs covering the complete e-business cycle.</p>	<p>An on-line helpdesk answers the most current questions and identifies the most appropriate actions. Successful experiences are analysed and presented for the benefit of the regional community.</p> <p>The two main tasks up till now for the helpdesk were:          Provide advice to SMEs on e-Business issues.          Create an ITC provider’s database (there are more than 600 IT providers in the region) to make it easier for SMEs to choose the provider that best satisfies their needs.</p> <p>These services have been used by more than 300 enterprises so far. Nearly 178 SMEs contacted the Leveraging Centre for information purposes, 42 initiatives were advised and the helpdesk recorded 96 case requests. Legal, payment or infrastructure advice was given to the following initiatives:</p> <p>FlorVertical (<a href="http://www.florvertical.com">www.florvertical.com</a>) a florist shop.          MeuVeterinario (<a href="http://www.meuveterinario.com">www.meuveterinario.com</a>) a veterinary clinic with pet companion services.          MasqueFotos (<a href="http://www.masquefotos.com">www.masquefotos.com</a>) Photography services portal.          Lavelis S.L., (<a href="http://www.lavelis.com">www.lavelis.com</a>) crafts shop.          Toldos Gómez S.L. (<a href="http://www.toldosgomez.com">www.toldosgomez.com</a>) They make Awnings, marquees and garden tents.          Varcacel S.L. (<a href="http://www.varcachel.es">www.varcachel.es</a>) Shell Fish and canned fish packers.          Miguel Agrícola S.L. (<a href="http://www.miguelagricola.com">www.miguelagricola.com</a>) Agricultural machinery and farm implements.          Tussa Transportes S.L. (<a href="http://www.tussa.org">www.tussa.org</a>) Public enterprise that manages the urban transport in Santiago de Compostela City (dependant on the town council)</p>

## 4.4 Information and Communication

This module concerns the intensive communication and dissemination actions in regard to the contents and results of the activities of the above mentioned modules to a regional and international level. Most actions falling under this module are intended to reach the target users of a Leveraging Centre (i.e. SMEs and citizens) so that they are aware of the existence of the LC and its benefits for them. However, actions can also be targeted

towards other regions where they are interested in knowing how to set up a LC, or towards politicians to make them aware of possible actions for improving the use of e-commerce in the regions.

Possible actions are:

- Participation on conferences
- Organisation of seminars
- Development of a website
- Make local newspapers, radio and TV interested in the Leveraging Centre, so that they will write about it
- Development of newsletters and other promotional material.

Again we will now show the actions developed by each of the three Leveraging Centres.

Activities assigned by the Observatory	Actions taken
<b>Cyprus</b>	
Conferences	<p>Participated to almost all local seminars held in Cyprus in relation to ICT during the project. Some of the most prominent were</p> <p>Press Conference under the auspices of the Minister of Communications and Works</p> <p>3rd Southern Eastern Conference on e-Commerce</p> <p>e-Commerce Medressa Conference</p> <p>In addition the Cyprus partners disseminated e-MINDER material in International events such as:</p> <p>15th Bled Electronic Commerce Conference</p> <p>IST 2002 - Partnership for the future</p> <p>Ministerial Conference on eEurope</p> <p>IST 2003 - The Opportunity Ahead</p> <p>Dubai 2003 Gitex Exhibition</p>
Mail and e-Mail	<p>Send more than 1.600 mail shots and addressed information to over 1.500 e-mail accounts directly by the Cyprus LC. In addition to this and thanks to the cooperation of a local eBank messages were sent to over 4.500 corporate subscribers and 50.000 individual accounts banking subscribers</p>
Media	<p>A number of radio stations hosted e-MINDER partners and had discussions on the LC activities.</p> <p>The Press conference had also a wide TV coverage. In addition, one of the TV stations had an interview with one the local partners during the main news broadcast.</p>

<b>Pomerania</b>	
<p>Organise and participate to conferences, seminars and presentations to present the idea of the project so that the awareness among SMEs, citizens and public administration about the advantages and possibilities that e-commerce can provide is constantly increased</p>	<p><b>Organisation of local and regional conferences as well as presentations:</b></p> <p>The launch of Pomeranian LC conference during which the ideas of the project and possibilities of LC's support for SMEs and public administration were presented to representatives of regional and local public administration units, employers' and SMEs' associations and SMEs.</p> <p>Presentation of e-MINDER ideas to representatives of local and regional employers' associations, regional institutions supporting SMEs, Institute for Research on Democracy and Private Enterprise.</p> <p>Numerous presentations to the Management of the Pomeranian Chamber of Craftsmen, management of local and regional institutions supporting SMEs in the Region, local branch organisations associating SMEs, to the representatives of Pro-European Education Centre – a non governmental organisation, to local authorities from County Offices and for workers of Regional European Union Information Points from Pomeranian Region about the possibilities of co-operation with the Pomeranian LC and the project ideas.</p> <p><b>Participation in local and regional conferences:</b></p> <p>Presentation of e-commerce issues and LC's support possibilities for SMEs and public administration during the Economy Forum organised by Gdansk Bank Academy.</p> <p>Presentation of the e-MINDER project ideas during the seminar devoted to the possibilities of obtaining funds by SMEs from the European Union.</p> <p>The Project was presented as an example of a successful co-operation of several European Regions supported by the EC to the participants of the training organised within the initiative "Small European Academy".</p> <p>Project and its ideas and possibilities of support were presented at the scientific conference "What Gdansk, What Poland? The Gdansk Region and European Union – Chances and Threats".</p> <p>Project and the Pomeranian LC presentation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum of Non-government Organisations that was participated by representatives of non-government organisations and SMEs' representatives.</p> <p>Project presentation and handing "e-MINDER Serwis" to the participants of the seminar devoted to obtaining financial support from EU.</p> <p><b>Participation and presentation of the e-MINDER project at international conferences:</b></p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> European Conference E-COMM-LINE 2002 in Bucharest, Romania</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference ECOM-02 in Gdansk organised by Interdepartmental e-Commerce Circle at the Technical University of Gdansk in co-operation with Human-Computer Interaction Group from the University of Twente, the Netherlands and the Marketing Department of the Technical University of</p>

	<p>Gdansk; the presentation was an introduction to the discussion on combining modern ICT with social needs of companies and SMEs in particular, public administration and citizens in developing information society.</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference ECOM-03 in Gdansk organised by Interdepartmental e-Commerce Circle at the Technical University of Gdansk in co-operation with Human-Computer Interaction Group from the University of Twente, the Netherlands and the Marketing Department of the Technical University of Gdansk</p>
Disseminate information about the project idea and e-commerce issues through media	<p>Local TV and radio stations participated in the Pomeranian LC launch conference and commented on the Centre and the project</p> <p>Local radio broadcast announcements about the training prepared by the Pomeranian LC for the inhabitants of the Region</p> <p>Local radio broadcast programmes about the ICT during which LC representatives explained issues of e-commerce and its advantages for SMEs</p>
Publish LC's own magazine	<p>Publishing Pomeranian LC's own magazine "e-MINDER Serwis"</p> <p>Handing out the 'E-MINDER Serwis' magazine during numerous meetings organised or participated in by the representatives of CC</p>
Make regional and local press interested in the project idea and e-commerce issues Publish articles and interviews in newspapers and magazines	<p>Articles in local press presenting the idea of the Pomeranian LC and training programme for SMEs</p> <p>Announcements in local press about the training prepared by the Pomeranian LC for the inhabitants of the Region</p> <p>Presentation of the project and its achievement as well as examples of practical implementation of e-commerce aspects supported by LC in daily activities of selected SMEs on the Gdansk Local public radio station</p>
Establish LC's website	<p>Establishing the website of the Pomeranian LC, (<a href="http://www.e-minder.pl">www.e-minder.pl</a>) where the information about the project itself and activities undertaken by the Pomeranian LC are presented and the possibility to contact the LC is provided</p>
Presentation of new technologies dedicated to e-government.	<p>Multimedia roadshow during which the CMS – Information System for Administration was presented to administration offices around the Pomeranian Region</p>
<b>Galicia</b>	
Conferences and Events	<p>The participation of the Galician LC in the related events has had a double dimension:</p> <p>Initially, these events were mostly devoted to raise awareness about the project activities and its impact at the regional level:</p> <p>e-Commerce Conferences (date, location, place):</p> <p>10-09-2002, Lugo. Caixagalicia.</p> <p>08-10-2002, Ferrol. Auditorio Recinto Feiral Punta Arnela</p>

	<p>05-11-2002, Ourense. Caixa Galicia          11-11-2002, Santiago. Chamber of Commerce.          03-12-2002, Pontevedra. Caixanova Auditorium.          Workshop FIP for young entrepreneurs. Chamber of Commerce. Santiago de Compostela          22-02-02.- Last Friday. “Electronic Commerce in Galicia: State of the art”          20-09-02.- SATT. New Technologies Telecommunication Atlantic Show. Vigo          15-10-02.- TECNIMAP. VII Jornadas sobre Tecnologías de la Información para la Modernización das Administraciones Públicas. (“Transforming e-Government”) – A Coruña          06-02-03.- "e-Commerce applied to the fishery sector" CETMAR Foundation. Vigo          7-3-03, 21-3-03 Qualytic Project Panels          21-03-03.- Jornadas sobre el pequeño comercio. "Complete su negocio con una tienda virtual" (e-Commerce and retailers). A Coruña</p> <p>Later on and once the project had been partially implemented, they were aimed at showcasing the e-MINDER project and the Galician Leveraging Centre as a “best practice example” in the field of regional e-business.</p> <p>Galicia LC has been requested to share its experience in many different national and international events:          DIESIS Seminar (Driving Innovative Exploits for Sardinian Information Society). Cagliari, 11-12 September 2003. Under the Sardinian Region's Innovative Action Programme the Galician Centre as a model for the setting up of a new Leveraging Centre in Sardinia.          Presentation at the 3rd Workshop of the European e-Business Support Network: “National, regional and sectorial e-business policies in favour of SMEs” - Panel 2: “Shaping efficient regional e-business policies for SMEs”. Paris, 27-28 October 2003.          IADIS International Conference e-Society 2003 (13-15 November) Lisbon –Portugal-          E-Rural Congress 2002 (28-29 November) Valencia – Spain-...</p>
Edition of a LC magazine	<p><b>e-negociogalicia magazine:</b> the 14 numbers published have become a reference for e-business contents and entrepreneurial e-initiatives within our region.          The magazine has been sent to 7.000 SMEs, institutions and mass media in Galicia, with almost 400 new subscribers during the project’s life</p>
Creation of a LC website	<p><b><a href="http://www.e-negociogalicia.com">www.e-negociogalicia.com</a>:</b> Strategic information, dissemination and support have been provided trough the website.          It has also become the best communication tool between the LC and the society in general -from April 2002 to September 2003 it achieved the total amount of 91.756 web user sessions-.          The website has also a key relevance for the LC</p>

	international cooperation issues. The website corporate identity is the LC best “presentation card” when contacting international institutions.
Media presence	<p>Dissemination of information in the regional mass media has become an important means of raising awareness on ICT and e-business and to promote the Leveraging Centre actions. Our activities have obtained a wide coverage by many different means:</p> <p>Radio and Television:</p> <p>Regional television appearances: Presence at the Galicia Television “Midday News” and “European focused magazines”.</p> <p>Santiago de Compostela local television: Midday and late news boosted Galician LC relevance at the Galician capital city (housing Regional Administration Headquarters).</p> <p>Participation as speakers at the e-tourism report “Destino Galicia”, showed at the national television with a regional coverage.</p> <p>Radio interviews focused on the LC activities and e-commerce regional state of the art</p> <p>Press releases</p> <p>There has been a close collaboration between Galicia LC and press. This has become the main communication channel of our activities (about 55 press releases have been published)</p> <p>In addition to this, the LC staff has also volunteered to give advice to specialized publications when requested. As an example of this cooperation , just to mention the joint effort of LC and regional press in the spreading among regional entrepreneurs of the European Commission, Directorate General Enterprise consultation on legal problems for enterprises doing e-business.</p>
Newsletters, promotional letters, e-mails, posters and leaflets	<p>Direct contact with our target audience has been achieved trough these means. The figures clearly show the relevance of this actions:</p> <p>Number of newsletters edited: 25</p> <p>Newsletter subscribers: 1.168</p> <p>Promotional letters sent: 513</p> <p>Promotional e-mails sent: 4.774</p> <p>Number of leaflets delivered: 10.100</p>
Memberships and awards	<p>With the aim of improving international dialogues and contacts the Galician centre has become member of the <b>European e-Business Support Network for SMEs – eBSN</b>, an organisation that brings together existing European, national and regional players in this field with a view to strengthening and co-ordinating actions in support of SMEs in the field of e-business. Besides, the Galician Leveraging Centre participates as Observer members for the <b>International Network for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Steering Group– INSME</b>, an initiative promoted by the Italian Government aimed at setting up a world-wide multistakeholder Community on innovation and technology transfer for SMEs.</p> <p>Galicia e-Commerce Leveraging Centre has received in 2003 the first award as best “e-Business Intermediary</p>

	<p>Institution” at the 7th Edition of ETI Awards. The aim of the ETI awards, organized by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Sun Microsystems and Computing Magazine is to reward the work of companies and institutions which have stood out in the field of technological innovation and development of their e-business services.</p>
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## **5 How does the e-MINDER network operate?**

Although the problems in a certain region might be quite particular, most of them are likely to exist in other regions as well. The e-MINDER LCs will therefore cooperate in a network in which experiences are shared, so that regions can benefit from what happened in another region. Currently there are three LCs forming the network. The intention is however to expand the network to other regions. In this chapter it is explained how LCs will interact with each other and how the network will expand itself.

### **5.1 Expansion policy**

The e-MINDER network will actively disseminate its existence and the advantages it brings among organisations interested in improving the e-Commerce activities within a region. All organisations that fulfil the following criteria can become part of it:

- The candidate organisation must be involved in activities related to improve the competitiveness of SMEs by means of the implementation of ICT.
- The candidate organisation must have the compliance of the regional/local governments to set up a new LC or to develop activities related to the promotion of e-commerce. It will be preferable that the candidate organisation counts on public support measures to develop the Centres activities.

If an organisation wants to become part of the e-MINDER network, they have to sign the e-MINDER Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This is a formal expression, by all its signatories, of the importance of making progress at European and international levels in the field of stimulating e-Commerce among economically underdeveloped regions.

The MoU is a voluntary agreement, entered into by organisations, companies and individuals prepared to be both pioneers and active participants in developing consensus on issues of common interest, and who are willing to commit both human and financial resources for this purpose. While there is no legal obligation to respect the agreements that emerge, the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding represents a public

commitment to respect certain principles and to work towards specific common goals and consensus in specific areas.

This document ensures the good nature of the information exchange.

## **5.2 Activities**

The main aim of the e-MINDER network is to foster cooperation between the different Leveraging Centres, so that they can learn from each other and solve common problems in common ways. This will be achieved by facilitating information exchange between the different LCs through annual conferences, newsletters, common repository, etc. We will now describe each of these activities:

### ***The network meetings***

e-MINDER LCN meetings are held twice a year in one of the Leveraging Centres. During these meetings Leveraging Centres discuss issues related to their operation that occurred in the half year before. Each Special Interest Group will organise a working session during this meeting.

### ***The annual conference***

Each year the network organises a conference to promote the e-MINDER network at the European Level. The most significant or innovative actions of the Leveraging Centres are presented. Participants are SMEs and regional organisations representatives coming from participating regions and from targeted regions. The annual conference will be held in one of the participating regions. The annual conference can coincide with an e-MINDER network meeting.

### ***A common repository***

A common e-Minder repository harvests contents provided by each Leveraging Centre. All network members can access the repository. It includes:

- Best practices in the sector of regional policies targeted to SMEs.
- References to regional policies and regional measures in the scope of e-Minder.

- References to European measures (and eventually national measures) that could be profitable for each region.
- Previous studies on regional economic situation and regional eCommerce assessment.
- Technical and legal information related to e-Commerce.
- Information about security issues related to e-Commerce.
- The e-Minder handbook.
- Material to prepare training and support activities.

Technically the e-Minder repository is accessible through a Web site. The e-Minder repository does not replace the regional Web sites that are targeted to the local SMEs. The e-Minder repository is implemented in English though of course it includes material in other languages. Available resources are normally provided for free. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances (e.g. training courses) they could be sold by one of the Leveraging centres to the other interested nodes.

#### ***The internal newsletter***

The e-MINDER network publishes an internal electronic newsletter on a bi-monthly basis. Its goal is to inform Leveraging Centres staff about the activities of the other Leveraging Centres and of the network. It equally includes information and references about e-Commerce and regional policies targeted to SMEs.

#### ***The external newsletter***

The e-MINDER network publishes an external electronic newsletter on a quarterly basis. The external newsletter is targeted to SME executives, regional policy makers, regional organisation staff and all potential readers involved in economic and regional policy, SME supporting policy, e-Commerce. It describes the Leveraging Centres activities and the latest network developments.

#### ***The dissemination at the European level***

Each Leveraging Centre is responsible for dissemination in its own region. The dissemination at the European and international level is organised and coordinated by the network. It includes participation in international events and conferences, publication, articles of journal, etc.

## **5.3 Retribution scheme**

Although the network will be designed as a “light” entity and most of the work will be done by the LCs on a voluntary basis, some costs are inevitable and cannot be carried by one of the individual LCs. These costs involve the salary and expenses of

- A part-time manager, that can organise the conferences, edit the newsletters, monitor the contents of the repository, and represent the network at the European level.
- A part-time webmaster to assist the manager.

Other costs are related to the hardware and software necessary for hosting the website and repository.

The annual costs are estimated to be around 20.000 euro, and will be equally shared by all the organisations taking part in the network. If it is not possible to find the necessary funding, the manager and part-time webmaster will work proportionally less time on fulfilling the objectives. If possible, external funding will be sought.

## **5.4 Organisation**

The LCN presupposes a minimum structure, based on coordination of co-operative activities.

### **5.4.1 e-MINDER LCN Manager**

The LCN Manager will be in charge of the following activities:

- organise the LCN events and conferences, edit the newsletters, monitor the contents of the repository,
- represent the network at the European level when necessary.

- edit the e-MINDER LCN website and ensure that the content information provided is accurate.

The Manager shall be appointed for a two-years term. A part-time webmaster may assist the manager in his/her normal activities.

#### **5.4.2 Executive Secretariat**

An Executive Secretariat shall coordinate the e-MINDER LCN. The Executive Secretariat and its chairman shall be elected from the members of the LCN. Currently, the representatives of the e-MINDER partners form the Executive Secretariat.

The functions of the Executive Secretariat are the following:

- Appoint the e-MINDER LCN Manager
- Monitor and supervise the work done by the Manager, especially the quality of the newsletter and other public information on the LCN website
- Propose events and conferences where the e-MINDER LCN may participate
- Represent the LCN before the EC, and other public and private national and international institutions
- Approving the creation, correct operation and termination of all SIGs, as well as the dissemination of SIGs' results outside e-MINDER LCN
- Evaluate and, if appropriate, accept requests for the incorporation of new members or cancel the membership of inactive members

The Executive Secretariat is chaired by the chairman.

Each Member of the Executive Secretariat shall have one vote. Decisions shall be adopted, whenever possible, by consensus; alternatively they shall be adopted by majority of the members of the Secretariat. In case of a draw, the vote of the chairman will be the casting vote.

### 5.4.3 General Assembly of the LCN

The General Assembly of the LCN, constituted by representatives of the members, shall meet at least once every year during one of the Network meetings. Their main task is to elect the members of the Executive Secretariat. Decisions shall be adopted, whenever possible, by consensus; alternatively they shall be adopted by majority of the members of the General Assembly. In case of a draw the casting vote will be provided by the former Executive Secretariat.

### 5.4.4 Special Interest Groups

The Special Interest Groups (SIG) are the working groups within the e-MINDER LCN and they are structured around key areas for co-operation. In fact they are open forums where discussion takes place around a specific topic in the domain of the e-MINDER LCN initiative. Any person with an Email address can become a member of one or more SIGs. In all cases, SIG membership is *ad personam*.

The topic of a SIG is specified in a *scope statement* and is reflected in the SIG's *title*. The main goal of a SIG is to reach and express a consensus view, or well-identified parts of it, and to generate appropriate reports.

SIGs may adopt any operating procedures they consider appropriate and a SIG Chair will be appointed as the responsible for its general operation. In particular, the Chair must ensure that all members are informed of proposals and are given the opportunity to openly participate in all discussion in the SIG.

Based on the existing four modules of the LCs, it is foreseen that four SIGs will start operating. A representative appointed by the current e-MINDER partners will chair each of them.

SIG	Title	SIG Chair
A	Regional co-operation network and infrastructure for Observatory	A representative of the Pomeranian LC
B	Regional co-operation network and infrastructure for Education and Training module.	A representative of the Galician LC
C	Regional co-operation network and infrastructure for demonstration activities	A representative of the Cypriot LC

D	Regional co-operation network and infrastructure for communication and dissemination module	A representative of SchlumbergerSema
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The SIG Chair is responsible for notifying the Executive Secretariat of SIG progress, including reports, decisions and any proposed modification to the SIG scope or working structure.

A new SIG can be proposed by anyone via the e-MINDER LCN web site or directly to the Executive Secretariat. If accepted by the Executive Secretariat the proposed new SIG becomes a Provisional SIG for a trial period of up to three months, and starts functioning on the e-MINDER LCN web site. The Executive Secretariat then determines if a SIG should become an Operational SIG or be discontinued.

A SIG can be ended by:

- a decision of the Steering Committee to terminate the SIG (e.g. due to lack of activity, merger of SIGs)
- the SIG members deciding the SIG should end (e.g. as it has reached a conclusion)

## **6 How to set up a new Leveraging Centre?**

The establishment of a new Leveraging Centre will always pass through 3 different phases: The inception phase, the elaboration phase and the development phase. We will now present guidelines and best practices for each of these phases.

### **6.1 Inception phase**

If an organisation or regional government wants to start a new Leveraging Centre, it should first understand what they want to reach with this LC. They could answer the following questions:

- What are the basic goals and tasks of the LC?
- Who is obliged to realise them?
- What is the time of their realisation?
- What are the necessary resources for the LC?
- What will be the revenues/benefits for the region of the LC?

#### **6.1.1 Definition of basic goals and tasks of a LC**

In order to understand the basic goals and tasks of the LC, some of the work normally done in the “Observatory” module should be carried out. The following questions need to be answered:

- What is the situation related to entrepreneurship? What is the entrepreneur’s awareness about the “e”- aspect? What is their level of IT and internet use?
- Why don’t SMEs and citizens use the possibilities offered through e-commerce?
- What can a LC do in order to remove the identified obstacles?
- How will the obstacles be leveraged?

### **6.1.2 Costs for setting up a Leveraging Centre**

Then it needs to be established how much money it will cost to leverage the identified obstacles, and what the economic benefits will be. The Cost Drivers of setting up a Leveraging Centre are:

- Labor cost of running a Leveraging Centre. During the first year of the whole process the labor cost of running the Leveraging Centre is estimated to be at least 50% of the total cost;
- Equipment. Necessary equipment for creating a Help Desk like:
  - office equipment (desks, chairs, telephone lines),
  - setting up a Database server for any queries (FAQ)
  - creating & hosting a web site.
- Administration Costs.

### **6.1.3 Benefits/revenues of a Leveraging Centre**

Different type of benefits/revenues may be expected from the operation of a LC. In order to quantify them, the following factors may be taken into account.

In case the LC is subsidised by a local government:

- More SMEs will start e-commerce activities, resulting in a more prosperous region with more tax income.
- Many companies may start with simple e-commerce activities. However, sooner or later, more innovative services will be defined which create new jobs in the region, “clean” jobs with a future!

In case the LC is not subsidised by a local government, and has to be self-sustainable, there are two possible business models (or a mixture of them):

- SMEs of the region benefiting from the LC might be asked to pay a membership fee. In return they can freely use the resources of the LC (i.e. go to the training courses, have access to a members-only part of the website, etc.)
- Provide services for SMEs on a commercial basis:
- Assist SMEs in improving their business processes
- Design & Implement e-shops for SMEs that want to use e-commerce.
- Delivery of specialized trainings, like Internet Training sessions for the Citizen and SME, e-commerce training for the SME and a specific course for merchants for e-shop management

#### **6.1.4 Legal status definition**

A Leveraging Centre forming part of the e-MINDER network is acting both at the regional/local level and at the network level. In principle, a Leveraging Centre can have any legal status. The choice of a legal status should be preceded by studying documents about the legal order in a particular country, and the political and socio-economic situation both in the country and the region. EU documents on ICT and documents referring to “e”-aspects should be analysed with particular attention. Governmental and local authorities’ documents in the country and region should also be similarly analysed taking the “e”-aspects into consideration. After studying the documents, a legal status should be chosen, taking into account the following considerations:

- Is it possible to carry out all foreseen activities of the LC (Observatory, Education and training, Demonstration and support, Dissemination and communication)?
- Does the legal status fit with the available financial resources?
- Does the legal status fit with the political objectives of the LC?
- Does the legal status fit with the overall legal/economic situation of the region?
- Does the legal status allow the LC to cooperate and share experiences with other LC’s of the e-MINDER network?
- Does the legal status facilitate network replication? This means to promote LC and network awareness in order to stimulate participation of new regions.

## **6.2 Elaboration phase**

The inception phase will end with a decision on the foundation of a Leveraging Centre. In case this decision has been positive, the elaboration phase starts. Then the objective is to implement each of the modules of a typical e-MINDER Leveraging Centre.

### **6.2.1 How to implement the Observatory module?**

The observatory module's objectives were described in Section 4.1. In order to achieve these objectives the following actions should be taken:

- identification and analysis of legal acts and general policies that constitute the guidelines for functioning of the public administration in an individual region. Especially acts and policies regarding the support of SMEs are very important, since the government administration entities are obliged to follow the government strategy of Information Technologies and regional development, which means they are obliged to take suitable actions in this scope,
- identification and analysis of needs and interests of SMEs in the region so that points to be improved can be found.

Within the Observatory the existing administrative structures should be used to collect, process and analyse data about the region since these institutions quite often already have access to demographic and economic data of the region and country, and they employ the suitable human resources and tools for data processing.

For the second point we propose the following research methodology:

- Detect obstacles that hamper the development of ICT use within SMEs in the region
- What is the level of importance of the obstacle? Should it be solved? What cost and benefits will that bring along?
- Definition of an action that can be carried out in one of the three other modules of the Leveraging Centre in order to diminish the obstacle.

In order to detect obstacles, we need to define a research plan. It defines goals of the observatory, how to reach these goals within the budget (i.e. how to obtain information), and a timetable.

Possible ways of obtaining information are:

- regional questionnaire research – direct interviews,
- observations,
- individual deepened interviews (IDI),
- focus group interviews (FGI),
- desk research – elaboration of data deriving from different sources such as e.g. National Statistical Office reports on e.g. the size of import, demand on individual products and services, socio-economic features of different consumer groups, etc.,
- field research – elaboration of data from original sources,

Direct interviews or handout of questionnaires will be conducted in different places:

- In companies, offices,
- At exhibitions, fairs, conferences.
- Note that if in a region the use of internet is not very well developed yet, it is not easy to reach the target group through internet, and more conventional ways should be found.

The target people for answering the questions are:

- Owners and employees of SMEs
- Unemployed (participating in preparations for establishing their own SME)
- Students of evening classes, participants of training courses (company employees)
- Farm owners (family companies)
- Administration clerks responsible for maintaining and updating Internet services of individual institutions
- Topics of discussion are related to:

- Regional research (learning relevant facts of the region, in order to identify the obstacles preventing the proper use of ICT),
- Microeconomic research (learning about occurrences and market relations referring to individual enterprises).

In addition to this, the observatory should also carry out:

- Macroeconomic research (learning about economic possibilities that the country, Europe or even the whole world offer, so that possible strategies can be defined that individual companies can follow in order to improve their economic position
- Technology watch: Monitor trends and obtain in depth knowledge of ICT and its possibilities.

## **6.2.2 How to implement the Education & Training module?**

Education and Training is an important module of each Leveraging Centre. It is an indispensable tool for improving the general background and skills of citizens and SMEs in ICT and e-Commerce related fields.

### **Training for citizens**

In order to reach citizens it is possible to seek cooperation with those organisations who are responsible for training unemployed people or with the administration of a town or village, so that all inhabitants can know its existence. In order to reach various cities, especially in remote places, it might be advantageous to make mobile facilities for providing courses, for instance in a bus. The training of citizens can start with basic training, and end with more advanced topics.

Basic internet training for citizens presenting the advantages of e-commerce and possibilities of its use in non-urban areas. It contains the following topics:

- What is the Internet? – a practical course and elements of computer use,
- Electronic mail and advanced methods of communication via the Internet.

- Advanced training for citizens, consisting of the following topics:
- Purchasing on the Internet,
- Elements of electronic banking,
- Creation of one's own website

### **Training for SMEs**

For SMEs a specific training action has the following structure:

1) Awareness conference.

2) Depending on the identified employees' skills of SMEs:

- A basic training course on the use of the internet and introduction to e-Commerce,  
or
- An advanced course on e-Commerce

The participants to the awareness conference consist of a somehow selected general audience. The basic or advanced courses are for those SMEs pointed out by other leveraging centres mechanisms (such as the observatory or the demonstration and support). In order to progressively improve and tune the material of courses and conferences as well as allowing other leveraging centre mechanisms to act (such as demonstration and support), courses are offered in each city in two waves, being each wave composed by a basic course and an advanced course. To provide a somehow continuous training, all courses for a given city are spread about two months of each other.

### **Conferences**

These conferences are oriented to SME managers that want their enterprises to get on the New Economy train. More specifically, they aim at making the participants aware of the new business opportunities that the Internet offers and to encourage them to introduce electronic commerce in their enterprise business model. Some key points of these talks are to make managers trust e-Commerce and be aware of training courses and other leveraging centre resources. The conference consists of two sessions, about one hour each

including questions from the audience. Even though the contents of each talk may vary slightly between Leveraging Centres, the general goals of each conference are:

To create awareness by:

- explaining the most general aspects of e-commerce and transmit to the SMEs managers the need and importance of making a gradual transition to the New Economy.
- introducing the leveraging centre infrastructure and functions as a way of boosting e-Commerce.
- giving an overview of e-commerce training courses to be held soon at the same location.

To create believe in the viability of e-commerce solutions in traditional SMEs by:

- commenting and analyzing actual SME experiences getting into the new economy
- putting emphasis on topics that people distrust the most and to present e-Commerce solutions for some of them:
  - Deployment issues
  - Virtual shops/malls
  - Electronic payment
  - Logistics
  - Marketing
  - Regulations

To show how the leveraging centre can ease the transition to e-Commerce

#### Courses

Theses courses are targeted to SMEs technical managers, who want to get their enterprise to the e-commerce world. Hence, courses are mainly focused into B2C and B2B solutions.

The main goal is to train the assistants with the most important concepts of e-commerce, to prepare them to get their enterprises into the New Economy. More concrete goals are:

- To understand e-commerce, its variants, and advantages and disadvantages.
- To know the importance and how to achieve good marketing policies in the Internet.
- To understand and trust security tools and payment choices in the Internet.
- To understand the uniqueness of logistics in the e-commerce world.
- To brief the legal face of e-commerce.
- To explain the steps, costs and choices available for deploying a complete e-commerce solution.
- To show some actual successful (and unsuccessful) e-commerce experiences.

Contents are organized into two courses, being the contents of the first course a subset of the second:

- Basic training course on the use of the internet and introduction to e-Commerce. Assuming that the attendant to this course is not so familiar with Internet, some effort is devoted to teach basic Internet concepts. After that a superficial view of e-Commerce concepts is presented, focusing primarily in the B2C model.
- Advanced course on e-Commerce for SMEs employees. Assuming that the attendant to this course has enough experience with Internet tools (web, e-mail, etc.), a deeper approach to e-Commerce is taken.

The following equipment and material is necessary for the courses:

- 1 PC per person, if possible, with:
  - Internet connection.
  - HTML compatible Browser.
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader
  - Electronic board for transparencies

In addition to the expected equipment given to the attendants (sheets, pen, pencils ...) there could be complementary equipment (if it is reflected in the budget):

- The transparencies used by the teacher.
- User feedback questionnaires.
- A CD-ROM with additional documentation (HTML courses questionnaires, examples, URL references ...).

Also, in order to obtain feedback from the users (in order to improve the courses) the teacher should provide to the students a questionnaire with some key questions about the courses. An example questionnaire is provided in the Templates section.

### **6.2.3 How to implement the Demonstration and Support module?**

In order to implement the Demonstration and Support module it is crucial to:

- Understand the legal framework about e-commerce in the region;
- Take decisions about what will be the targeted audience;
- Decide what type of services will be offered via the Leveraging Centre;
- Be aware of the needs of the SMEs in the region related to e-commerce and ICT. For example, if the case is that SMEs don't have IT department it is clear that this module is needed in order to leverage this cost for the SME;
- Identify best practices in the region demonstrating the different e-Commerce models (Business-to-Consumer, Business-to-Business or Consumer-to-Consumer). These best practices may be (virtually or in real life) visited by other SMEs who want to do something similar, and who want to learn from the pioneers.
- Providing of information, orientation, assistance and advisory services to businesses in the region;
- Providing consulting services to SMEs as to the re-engineering of their infrastructure and procedures to accommodate an e-Commerce channel. The services included Feasibility studies and e-Commerce Audit.
- Providing assistance in selecting suitable e-Commerce solutions for SMEs in the region. This function should be carried out carefully, since a Leveraging Centre

should be objective, and with this type of service it is easy to become stakeholder in selling specific solutions

In case no suitable platforms are available for a certain group of SMEs the development of a specific e-commerce platform may be considered. Such a solution must provide:

- Security. To implement an e-commerce application, security is a crucial requirement. The security system should be able to block unauthorised users, but also ensure access to the system by authorised users, despite (malicious) attempts, as for example a denial-of-service attack;
- Reliability. End users are usually very demanding and can not tolerate outages and down time. This does not mean that when the system is down or does not present the correct information that the end user will come back later, most of the times end users will go into another store to get what they need. This means that the customers of the e-commerce environment will not tolerate this behaviour and will move to find a more reliable e-commerce service provider;
- Concurrency. This denotes whether or not multiple users can access the database at the same time. Since an e-business environment has such issues the database must have concurrency control mechanisms;
- Speed. The time that a user can see a web page after the clicking the button “Enter” is of utmost importance in the list of e-commerce requirements.

The Support module interface is realised via the Help Desk. The Help desk aims to create awareness, provide information to SMEs & Citizens and assist SMEs in turning their business to e-enable. There are two main operational areas:

For the first one, the help desk is a tool for guiding and helping Companies and Citizens in e-commerce related issues. Companies and Citizens have a lot of initiatives, aims, questions, doubts ... etc that must be answered. They must be able to use the Leveraging Centre as a source of information that will give answers and; for Companies, a good start-up guide to integrate the e-commerce in its business processes.

The second role is about the information generated during the “help” process. All the useful information that will be recorded by the help desk could be used for taking a picture of the state-of-the-art in e-commerce and IT for the replication of the experience. This information could feedback other Leveraging Centre areas (Communication, Observatory and Training) as well as other synergies with projects in different frameworks. Also this information should complement the one obtained in the surveys.

The implementation of the Help Desk can be done by having a physical presence, a phone line, a web-site or a combination of the three.

This module is of course also highly interlinked with the Information and Communication module, since a lot of support will be provided by making available relevant information for the citizens and SMEs of the region. How to implement Information and Communication will be described in the next section.

## **6.2.4 How to implement the Information and Communication module?**

This module is responsible for intensive communication and dissemination actions to a regional and international level. The main objective of these actions is to give major visibility to the contents and results of the activities of the above-mentioned modules and the project findings to our target audience.

Dissemination activities are oriented towards the implementation of the following goals:

- Raise awareness and to facilitate access to ICT and e-commerce knowledge resources to the business sector and to society at large.
- Raise awareness in European regional public administrations of electronic commerce as a tool for developing regional economies.
- Help the LCs to identify other European regional actors at stake and establish new channels of communication and collaboration.

In order to reach these objectives different communication channels are used, consisting of traditional communication methods (such as publications in mass media or press releases) and Internet channels, which are the cheapest and most effective way to reach a wider audience. Recommended dissemination activities are:

- **Magazine:** a periodical magazine shall be published developing e-trade contents and explaining the LC's main actions and findings. This magazine should be distributed in the region.
- A common **corporate identity** should be developed for a LC. A common logo will help identify their actions and activities.
- A **website** will give major visibility to the LC and will be the best launch pad for reports and studies.
- Using the website as a launch pad, a **newsletter** will communicate the actions, activities and reports of the LC.
- As a successful way to reach local mass media, **public relations (PR)** and **press releases** are a good strategy to reach visibility and publications at local level, spreading news and outputs of interest for regional and international stakeholders.
- **Promotional leaflets, letters, e-mails, hand-outs, questionnaires, etc.** are also delivered as paper material disposable for the target audience
- Also, **publications in specialized magazines** and **proceedings** will disseminate the LC results and reports.
- Development of a **promotional brochure**, which should include a description of the LC activities and to offer the possibility of contacting people/SMEs/organizations interested in the results and support models undertaken by the participant partners. To reach a multiplying effect, this report should be distributed via e-mail/newsletter.
- Finally, the organisation of **press conferences and meetings** stimulates awareness and showcases the benefits and results of the LC existence.

As far as the persons in charge for the management of this module are concerned, they should comprise a heterogeneous but yet complementary team, covering at least the following profiles:

**-Dissemination and Communication Manager:** ensuring the coordination of the dissemination and promotion activities and defining its scope and identity.

**-Supporting staff:** reinforcing and increasing dialogue and interaction with regional and international stakeholders and supporting the feeding of the magazine, website, newsletters...

**-Graphic designer:** Helping in the drawing up of the visual corporate identity of the Centre and in the magazine and website laying out.

## 6.3 Development phase

During the development phase the LC is in full operation. Reflection will be important in order to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the chosen action. Therefore, the main advice provided in this chapter is related to how to reflect.

### 6.3.1 How to evaluate results?

As we discussed in a previous section, the development of the Leveraging Centre is separated into three segments. First, we identify the constraints that hold back the development of e-commerce in a region; second, we have to find out what it needs to be leveraged in order to increase the level of e-commerce in a region, and last we list activities and actions to overcome and leverage the obstacles identified.

After the initial assessments and action definition the LC has to evaluate the work done so far in order to reorient if necessary any further studies and reorient the actions at the modules. Having in mind that the results may not always be tangible, the evaluation may not be an easy task. Therefore we need a more structured and methodological way to perform evaluation.

In the following we propose a methodology for evaluating the results taken from the Leveraging Centre to determine whether the level of e-business in a region has increased.

The Methodology has three steps, two of which need to be periodically run in order to determine if the level of e-business has increased or decreased during that period.

Step 1: List attributes that define e-business

Step 2: Measure e-Commerce

Step 3: Identify Level

**Step 1: List attributes that define e-business**

The most difficult part of the evaluation is the identification of the components that define the status of e-business level in a region. Do we consider having a high level of e-business by only having an ICT infrastructure or do we need something more? This kind of questions should trouble us, as there isn't yet a way specified for mapping out an e-business scale.

The first step of the methodology is to identify a range of attributes that define e-business. By doing so, we set up the criteria for measuring the level of e-business in a region. Based on the level of implementation that each defined attribute is implemented and the weight assigned to the attribute we can compute the level of e-business in a region.

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) indicates that there are three ways to measure e-Commerce:

- **E-Commerce readiness:** Technical, commercial and social infrastructures necessary to support e-Commerce.
- **E-Commerce intensity:** State of e-Commerce application.
- **E-Commerce Impact:** Multiplier effects, i.e. impact of e-Commerce on efficiency and creation of new sources of wealth.

During the project we have identified that in order to measure e-Commerce one could split the task in three perspectives:

**Citizen perspective.** The perspective of the consumer. If the citizen is not aware and ready then we will not have a market. As attributes, that define the level of e-Commerce in the context of the citizen perspective, the project has identified and used the following:

- **PC at home:** The three regions identified this attribute in order to identify if the average user has a PC at home. With this attribute the regions measured the penetration of the PC at home in order to identify if the average citizen understands the importance of learning how to use a PC and to see if the average user has the mean to connect to the internet at his house.
- **Internet users:** This attribute showed to the three regions how many citizens are aware of the existence of internet and have used it to find information. We need to specify though that we distinguish the two because some internet users do not own a PC but connect and use the internet at work.
- **e-Commerce purchase:** This attribute is the key in identifying if the citizen of the region has realized that the internet is another delivery method of goods and is willing to exploit it to purchase good from the office or at home in any given moment.

**SME perspective.** If the SME is not aware and ready then there is no one to offer e-Commerce services. The network has identified the following attributes that set the level of e-Commerce in the context of the SME perspective:

- **Internet presence:** This attributes has three main components. The SMEs Internet connection type if one exists. The SME website if one exists and if the SME has an e-Commerce application in place as another selling channel.
- **Back office:** Here we can see if the SME has adopted technology in the everyday routine work in order to assess if the SME is able to take his business online. For that the network has found that the following needs to be measured. PC penetration in company in the means of PC per employee and the applications the SME has adopted in order to complete its processes. Applications include office tools (word processors, spreadsheets), ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning (inventory control, order tracking, customer service, finance and human resources).

**Society perspective.** In the context of the society one needs to focus on the three aforementioned aspects:

- **Banking:** Assessing the e-services offered by banks in the term of promoting to citizens the trust of going online and conducting transaction that it would usually require them to visit the actual facilities.
- **Education:** Assessing the educational curriculum in order to establish the level of e-Commerce awareness towards today's teenagers tomorrow's consumer and entrepreneurs. Another factor is assessing the training institutions located in the region and their ability to instruct internet and e-Commerce classes.
- **Government:** In order to establish the level of e-Commerce we must also examine if the government supports it through the legal framework it adopts, the e-Government services it offers and last but not least of by offering e-Government services it provides awareness towards online transactions.

### **Step 2: Measuring e-Commerce**

In order to effectively measure e-Commerce the network has used mainly statistical analysis of surveys conducted in each region and statistical data collected by various government bodies.

The e-MINDER network has measured the level of each of these attributes by the use of surveys conducted at the beginning of the LCs operations and the use of several statistical data acquired by government bodies.

### **Step 3: Identify Level**

Through the different assessments made during the second part of the development of the Leveraging Centre, we could gather enough information towards the attributes we identified previously. At this point we could set a scale and record the current level of e-Commerce in the region. In order to do that the following weights per category is used. The weights set below are by no means the golden key in defining the level but they were set based on empirical data.

- Citizen: 0.25
- SME: 0.5
- Society: 0.25

In order to computer the level of each category one should measure the level of each attribute in the region and multiply them with their respective weights.

#### Citizen Perspective

- PC at home: 0.35
- Internet Users: 0.40
- e-Commerce Purchases: 0.25

#### SME Perspective

- Internet Presence: 0.65
- Back office: 0.35
- Society Perspective
- Banking: 0.20
- Education: 0.70
- Government: 0.10

### **6.3.2 How to reorient and balance modules?**

This handbook provides some basic general guidelines in order to establish a LC in a particular region. The four-module structure is a good starting point for the LC, but this structure, and the activities of each module, should be adapted to the regional idiosyncrasy.

This adaptation should raise a growth in some modules while others will be reduced. In addition, this reorienting and balancing of the activities in each module is a direct consequence of these regional characteristics (SMEs awareness and education level, ICT infrastructure, Services etc...) , taken into account in the studies of the observatory module. Also, as a part of the balancing modules issues, new modules could be created, if the new assessed activities cannot be deployed in one of the existing modules. For example, the Galician LC, has a new module called “Cooperation module” with the aim cooperating with other institutions in order to implement innovation projects addressing its overall objective: fostering SMEs’ competitiveness and regional development through the use of information and communication technologies (ITC). With the help of the LC

Network members and with the experience gained, the Galician Leveraging Centre provides support to those organizations and enterprises who want to take part in international projects. In addition to its current four modules, the Centre has established specific research and innovation guidelines that will be developed by the means of these joint activities. This module was created because of the feedback provided by the helpdesk and training module.

Yet another way of reorienting and balancing the existing modules has to do with the actions registered in each module. Some modules could have less activity than others because of these regional specific parameters, so some low income activities could feedback or create new ones in other related modules. For example, the helpdesk is a good tool for that to show the real state of the SMEs awareness and education related to e-Commerce and ICT. A low activity in the helpdesk (low income queries) and also not very complicated queries like, basic internet or e-commerce skills, should tell us that the awareness is not very high. A derived action to correct this could be to put more emphasis or improve with more examples the basic training courses, or create some graphical HOWTOs of how an virtual shop works and publish them in the Leveraging Centre website etc ...

Due to the heterogeneous idiosyncrasy of each region, some of the actions taken for each module could be different from one LC to other, although the main actions of each module are common for all the LCs. The duty of every LC should be to identify and address the differences between the general structure of an LC and the regional characteristics.

### **6.3.3 Frequently Encountered Difficulties**

There were four major areas of difficulties that were identified during the project that had a negative effect to the tasks, the plan and results of the projects. Partners had to accommodate extra efforts in order to mitigate these difficulties and successfully meet the objectives and deadlines of the project. The encountered difficulties were as follows:

Conservatism	It has been widely identified that most SMEs and Citizens in our regions have viewed the move towards e-Commerce in a conservative approach. The effect of this difficulty has been the slow results at the beginning of the project.
Regional Government Policies	Though in all regions e-MINDER has received a wide support by local Government Authorities the results of the project did not directly involve the changes of policies other than providing suggestions to local / regional Governments. These changes of policy suggestions made to our Governments were not implemented within the 24-month duration of the project and therefore did not have the required effect to project result.
Economic Recession	All regions suffered a general recession during 2001 and 2002 lowering the priorities from all parties involved towards e-commerce investments and general spending
Technology	Technology of e-Commerce is changing rapidly and therefore platform related LCs had to re-evaluate their technology during the project to accommodate teething problems identified

## 7 ANNEXES

### 7.1 Example of questionnaires to evaluate the training courses

#### 7.1.1 Initial questionnaire

The goal of this questionnaire is to establish the student profile with respect to ICT and e-Commerce; this information can be useful for the lecturer to adapt his/her material to student's expectations.

1. Business activity

2. Age

- 19 or less
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50 or more

3. Sex

- Male
- Female

4. Degree

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Master Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Ph.D. Degree

5. Enterprise role

6. Computer science knowledge

- None
- E-mail / Internet
- Office tools such as word processor, spreadsheet, etc.
- Management and administration programs (accounting, payrolls...)
- Computer science technician

7. Internet knowledge (multiple)

- None
- IRC
- Webmail

- FTP
- Web browsing
- Directories and search engines

8. Is your business taking advantage of the new technologies?

- Yes
- No

9. Have you heard of electronic commerce before this course?

- Yes
- No

10. Give a definition of electronic commerce

11. Do you believe that you and your enterprise can benefit from e-Commerce?

- Yes
- No

12. Is your enterprise thinking about starting some e-Commerce project in the near future?

- Yes
- No

13. How did you know about the Leveraging Centre?

- I don't know it
- Actions of Leveraging Centre (such as LC magazine)
- Leveraging Centre web site
- Mass media

14. Do you know Leveraging Centre services?

- Yes
- No

## 7.1.2 Final Questionnaire

The final questionnaire summarizes the results of the training actions by measuring which areas are more or less important for the student, a global evaluation of the course (useful for improving future courses) , and the degree of commitment with Leveraging Centre activities.

1. Which topic do you consider more important for your enterprise? (multiple)

- Information systems basic concepts
- Internet basic concepts
- Internet Technologies
- E-Commerce basic concepts

2. Which topic do you consider less important for your enterprise? (multiple)

- Information systems basic concepts

- Internet basic concepts
- Internet Technologies
- E-Commerce basic concepts

3. Do you think there was some missing Internet-related topic?

4. Which topic do you think that are enough clear now? (multiple)

- Information systems basic concepts
- Internet basic concepts
- Internet Technologies
- E-Commerce basic concepts

5. The contents were: (multiple)

- Well structured and organized
- Well developed
- Easy to understand
- Well related one another

6. The sessions were

- Too dense
- Balanced
- Too simple

7. The lecturer: (multiple)

- Teaches clearly
- Knows about the subject
- Makes lectures interesting
- Encourages discussion

8. Do you like to get deeper in a particular topic?

- Yes. Which one? \_\_\_\_\_
- No

9. Do you like to attend a more advanced course on e-Commerce to get deeper in the subject?

- Yes
- No

10. After attending the course, do you think of developing an e-Commerce project within your enterprise?

- Yes
- No

11. If true, do you think this course or other Leveraging Centre services have positively influenced your decision?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think that the services offered by the Leveraging Centre are interesting?

- Yes
- No

13. Which Leveraging Centre services do you think that are more interesting for your enterprise?

14. What additional services do you include in the Leveraging Centre?

15. Do you know that the Leveraging Centre offers support and assistance to enterprise to get into e-Commerce?

- Yes
- No

16. Do you want to be user of this service?

- Yes
- No

## 7.2 Example of a socio-economic survey plan questionnaire

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Survey purpose

1.1.1 The purpose of the survey is to define the level of readiness of Electronic Commerce in Cyprus and assist in determining the criteria for successfully e-enabling SMEs.

#### 1.2 Survey objectives

1.2.1 The survey questionnaire aims in providing information about the level of SMEs penetration in the e-business market, about Internet perception both by SMEs and citizens, about future plans for penetrating the e-business market and the level of e-Commerce awareness.

1.2.2 The survey questionnaire objectives are:

- Define ICT penetration both in SMEs and citizen sectors
- Define the level of SME penetration in the e-business.
- Define the level of SME and Citizen e-Commerce awareness, perception and usage.
- Define the expectations and needs for services from electronic commerce by SMEs.
- Define the criteria to successfully e-enable SMEs:
  - Define current constraints.
  - Provide feedback to the strategy of promoting e-commerce.

#### 1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The objectives of the survey will be met by preparing two separate questionnaires, one for the citizen and one for the SMEs.

### 2 CITIZEN QUESTIONNAIRE

#### 2.1 Objectives

2.1.1 The objective of the citizen survey questionnaire is to define the e-commerce awareness of the Cypriot citizen. Additionally, but also very important, we must determine the demand of buying goods online in the Cyprus market in order to define our target market, and the constraints that exist for a successful introduction of e-commerce to the citizens.

##### 2.1.2 *Criteria for existence of electronic commerce*

2.1.3 One criterion for existence of electronic commerce in a region is a level of demand high enough to provide a return on investment acceptable to SMEs.

2.1.4 The objective of the survey is to define the demand for products and services that can be purchased electronically. In the case that demand is judged to be insufficient then we must seek to find other market opportunities for exploitation.

### 2.1.5 Conclusions

- 2.1.6 The survey questionnaire must focus on e-commerce awareness, on consumption habits and amount of consumption on categories of goods. This will define the demand and the amount of money spent by households on different goods. In addition, we must define success products; products that can be sold online and there is the demand for those products by the citizens of the region.

## 2.2 Survey questions

### 2.2.1 Do you have a PC at home

- Yes
- No

If not, why?

- High Cost
- Don't know how to use
- No need to use
- Have a PC at work / university / college / etc.
- Afraid to use

### 2.2.2 Are you aware of the term Internet?

- Yes
- No

### 2.2.3 Do you have Internet access in your house?

- Yes

If yes, how much money do you spend per month (Internet subscription plus telephone costs)

Less than 10 CYP

More than 10 CYP, less than 20 CYP

More than 20 CYP, less than 35 CYP

Over 35 CYP

- No

If not, why?

- High Cost
- Don't know how to use
- No need to use
- Have Internet access at work / university / college / etc.

- Afraid to use
- (go to 2.2.6)

2.2.4 How many hours do you spend online?

- Less 30 minutes daily
- Between 30 minutes to 1 hour daily
- 1-2 hours daily
- More than 2 hour daily

2.2.5 How do you use the Internet? (Multiple Selections)

- Email
- IRC
- Information Gathering for:
  - News
  - Financial
  - Sports
  - Directories
- Games
- Buy things
- Sell things
- Other

2.2.6 Are you aware of e-commerce sites (Buying from the Internet)?

- Yes
- No

2.2.7 Have you visited any e-commerce sites?

- Yes
- No

2.2.8 What do you visit most? Cyprus sites or international sites? Please indicate the percentage.

- Cyprus
- International

2.2.9 In which language do you prefer to access e-commerce sites?

- Greek
  - English
  - Either
- 2.2.10 Have you ever shopped from e-commerce sites?
- Yes
  - No (if no go to question 2.2.18)
- 2.2.11 If yes, why? (Don't read answers, multiple answers expected)
- 24x7 shopping
  - Home delivery
  - Cheaper
  - The product was only available online
  - Better service
  - Shop from home
  - Variety
- 2.2.12 In your opinion what is the most important reason from the ones you mentioned above?
- 2.2.13 Do you prefer buying from international electronic shops?
- Yes
  - No
- 2.2.14 If yes, why? (Don't read answers, multiple answers are accepted)
- Better service
  - Understand your requirements better
  - Cheaper
  - Safer
  - More trust-worthy
  - Other
- 2.2.15 If you shop from local electronic shops why? (Don't read answers, multiple answers are accepted)
- Better service
  - Understand your requirements better
  - Cheaper

- Faster
- I like to support my home country
- They are equally trust-worthy and secure as international sites.
- Other

2.2.16 What is the amount you spent annually online?

- 0
- Up to 100 CYP
- 100-250 CYP
- 250-500 CYP
- 500-1000 CYP
- 1000-2500 CYP
- 2500-5000 CYP
- Over 5000 CYP

2.2.17 What type of products did you buy from the Internet? (Multiple selections)

- CDs
- Books
- Computer software
- Computer hardware, peripherals, and accessories
- DIY hardware
- Mobile phones
- Toys
- Electronics
- Clothes
- Services
- Holidays, air-tickets, hotel reservations, car rentals
- Groceries
- Cars
- Gardening
- Office equipment
- Other

(Now go to question 2.2.20)

2.2.18 If you haven't shopped from the Internet, why? (Don't read answers, multiple answers expected)

- I am not aware of the term e-commerce and that possibility
- Transactions are not secure
- Want to see the product before I buy
- Extra cost of shipping
- Legislation for e-commerce is poor
- Like traditional ways of shopping
- Slow connections
- Difference in prices
- Poor return goods policy
- Other

2.2.19 Under what circumstances would you buy from the Internet? (Don't read answers)

- If the site guarantees the security of my credit card information
- If the site guarantees my personal information
- If delivery time is guaranteed
- If quality is guaranteed
- Prefer to buy brand names
- If COD (Cash On Delivery) method of payment was available
- I would buy anyways
- Other

2.2.20 What (other) products would you consider purchasing: (Multiple selections)

- CDs
- Books
- Computer software
- Computer hardware, peripherals, and accessories
- DIY hardware
- Mobile phones
- Toys
- Electronics
- Clothes
- Services
- Holidays, air-tickets, hotel reservations, car rentals

- Groceries
- Cars
- Gardening
- Office equipment
- Other

2.2.21 What do you think describes you as a consumer? (answers will be scaled)

- Unpredictability/ spontaneous shopping
- Likes to bargain before buying
- Likes to know who he is shopping from
- Likes to shop from someone he knows in order to get discounts
- Walking and window shopping
- Wants to know what he is buying (known quality)
- Likes to shop from close proximity shops
- Other

2.2.22 Would you prefer purchasing e-commerce goods using a

- PC
- Telephone (Wap)
- Either

2.2.23 What is your age?

- 0-11
- 12-17
- 18-24
- 25-42
- 43-60
- 61-over

2.2.24 Gender

- Male
- Female

2.2.25 City

- Nicosia

- Limassol
- Larnaca
- Pafos
- Paralimni
- Other, please specify

2.2.26 What is your level of education

- Primary school
- High school
- Associate degree
- University

2.2.27 Describe your financial status

- 0-6000
- 6000-12000
- 12000-20000
- 20000-30000
- Over 30000

2.2.28 How much do you spent monthly on the following categories?

- Necessity goods (food, clothes, cleaning material etc)
- Entertainment (café-bar restaurant, movies DVDs, theatre, music CDs etc)
- Holidays (local, overseas hotels)
- Luxurious goods (jewellery, expensive clothes, champagne etc)
- Communication
  - Fixed Telephone
  - Mobile Telephone

### 3 SME QUESTIONNAIRE

#### 3.1 Objectives

3.1.1 The objective of this survey questionnaire is to define e-commerce awareness of SMEs, the level of e-commerce readiness and the criteria under which an SME will enter e-business.

##### 3.1.2 *Electronic commerce readiness*

3.1.3 E-commerce awareness is defined by the degree of realisation of electronic commerce and its potential by SMEs. The readiness for electronic commerce development is defined by the level of penetration of IT in the SME, the general perception of technological advancements and their willingness to adopt an e-commerce environment.

##### 3.1.4 *Criteria of electronic commerce development*

3.1.5 The criteria of electronic commerce development are the factors that will influence an SMEs decision to become e-enabled.

##### 3.1.6 *Conclusions*

3.1.7 The survey questionnaire must focus on e-commerce awareness of SMEs, information technology penetration in the company, and on the factors that influence their decisions in the company.

#### 3.2 Survey questions

3.2.1 Name of company

3.2.2 Average age of Executive Team

- 20-30s
- 30-40s
- 40-50s
- 50-60s
- 60-70s

3.2.3 City

- Nicosia
- Limassol
- Larnaca



- Pafos
- Paralimni
- Other, please specify

#### 3.2.4 Industry

- Tourism / Hotel
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Export / Import
- Services
- Other, please specify

#### 3.2.5 Products/Services

- Books
- CDs
- Movies (VHS-DVDs) / Video Rentals
- Apparel
- Shoes
- Kitchenware
- Toys
- Garden Products
- Furniture
- Cars
- Electronics
- Financial Services
- Legal Services
- IT Services
- Business Consulting (excluding IT)
- Other, please specify

#### 3.2.6 Size of company

- 1
- 2-5



- 6-9
- 10-20
- 21-50
- 51-100
- 101-250
- More than 251

3.2.7 What are the company's future plans in general? (Do not read answers)

- No particular future plans
- Increase customers through marketing campaigns
  - TV / Radio
  - Magazines / Newspapers campaign
  - Brochures in selected areas
- Expand within the city or in another city
- Expand abroad
- Expand products / services the company offers
- Other, please specify

3.2.8 How many computers do you have in the company?

- One for each employee
- More than 90% of the employees have one
- 50% to 75% have one
- 25% to 50% have one
- 1% to 25% have one
- None

3.2.9 Who uses them? (Multiple Selections)

- Managing director
- Executive team
- Managers
- Employees
- Secretary

3.2.10 Do you have an IT Department?

- Yes
- No

If not, do you outsource any of the following IT services?

- Development
- Support and maintenance
- Training

3.2.11 For each row, encircle whether your organisation is currently using or planning to use the following? (*Encircle only one code where applicable*)

	1. Use	2. Plan to use within one year	3. Plan to use after one year	4. No plans to use
1. Company Network	1	2	3	4
2. Electronic Link with Partners (suppliers, customer, etc.)	1	2	3	4
3. Internet	1	2	3	4

3.2.12 Categorise the number of computers you currently have and the number you plan to have in your organisation with respect to type

Computer Type	Now	Plan to use within one year	Plan to use after one year	No plans to use
1.Server				
2.Workstation (PC)				
3.Notebooks/Laptops				
4.Mainframe				

3.2.13 How are the company's computers being used now (n) and how are they going to be used in the future (f)? (Multiple Selection)

- Accounting / Auditing
- Logistics / Order processing

- Inventory Management (Stock control)
- Communication (e-mail, EDI, etc)
- Internet
- Office tools
- ERP
- CRM
- HR (payroll, etc)
- Other, please specify

**3.2.14** If you have an Internet connection, what is the current bandwidth (speed of connection) and what is the bandwidth you intend to have in the future? If no Internet connection exists go to 3.2.18 (**Multiple answers possible**)

	Bandwidth	When did you acquire the connection?	
		Now	Future
1. Dial up line			
2. Leased line			
3. ISDN			
4. ADSL			
5. Half-circuit			
6. Other (specify)			

**3.2.15** If there exists Internet access in the company, how is it used? (Multiple Selection)

- For e-mail
- Surfing the Internet to get information
- To find suppliers and/or partners
- To target potential customers
- To exchange information with partners/suppliers (EDI, etc)
- For teleconferencing and/or videoconferencing
- For extranet / intranet purposes
- To sell products and/or services directly
- Other, please specify



3.2.16 How many of the computers have Internet access?

- All
- More than 75%
- 50% to 75%
- 25% to 50%
- 10% to 25%
- Just one
- None

3.2.17 Who has access to the Internet? (Multiple Selection)

- Managing director
- Executive team
- Managers
- Employees
- Secretary

3.2.18 How important is it for the company to have an Internet presence?

- Very much important
- Important
- A little important
- Not important

3.2.19 Does your company have an Internet presence?

- Yes
- No

3.2.20 If the company has an Internet presence, what kind of presence is that? (Multiple Selection)

- For Communication purposes (email with customers, partners/suppliers, exchange of information etc)
- For Marketing purposes
  - We have a brochure type of website (General description of company and contact information)
  - We have detailed description of our products listed on our website
- For e-commerce (sell products)



- Other, please specify.

3.2.21 If NO, why you do not have an Internet presence?

- Too Expensive
- No real benefit to the company. Why?
- Don't know how to begin doing that
- Never considered it
- I am in the process of going online
- Other, please specify

3.2.22 Who do you think the ages of Internet users in Cyprus are? (Multiple selections)

- 0-18
- 19-24
- 24-40
- 41-55
- 55+
- I don't know

3.2.23 What do you think the occupation level of Internet users in Cyprus is? (Multiple selections)

- High-school students
- University / College Students
- Employees
- Supervisors
- Managers
- Executives
- I don't know

3.2.24 Are the above types of persons a part of your target market?

- Yes
- No

3.2.25 Do you know what e-commerce is?

- Yes



- No

3.2.26 How do you think a company can benefit from electronic commerce? (Don't read answers – Rank your selections)

- Expand to international markets
- Expand to nationally
- Increase in sales
- New marketing channels, methods, and strategies
- Inventory streamline
- Better company image
- Better service
- A 24x7 shop
- On-line catalogue of all products offered
- Customisation of products to suit specific customer needs
- Attract a wider market of suppliers
- Reduction of costs

Other, please specify

3.2.27 What do you think are the problems of electronic commerce (Rank your selections)?

- Do not know what it involves and how much it will cost
- Unsecured Transactions
- Quality uncertainty of products
- Consumers are not confident
- Lack of e-commerce legislation
- Infrastructure
- Too complicated to manage (resources etc)
- Too complicated to administer and maintain
- Other, please specify

3.2.28 If you have or plan to have e-commerce, do you or would you like to:

- Own the e-commerce site
- Sell products in a website where other SMEs have their own shops as well
- Sell products through third party sites



- Don't know

3.2.29 If you have an e-commerce site, who is your ISP? (if not go to question 3.2.35)

- CYTANET
- Spidernet
- Logosnet
- AvacomNet
- GlobalSoft
- Planitis Communications
- Other, please specify

3.2.30 How many unique visitors do you have per month?

- 1-50
- 51-100
- 101-500
- 501-1000
- 1000-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-25000
- 25000-50000
- More than 50000
- I don't know
- I don't answer

3.2.31 How many orders do you have per month?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21-50
- 50-100
- 100-250
- 250-500



- 500-1000
- 1000-2500
- More than 2500
- I don't know
- I don't answer

3.2.32 Do you have a membership/subscription scheme in your e-commerce site?

- Yes
- No

3.2.33 If yes, how many subscriptions/members do you have?

- 1-50
- 51-100
- 101-500
- 501-1000
- 1000-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-25000
- 25000-50000
- More than 50000
- I don't know
- I don't answer

3.2.34 Please break down into percentages the users your visitors according to their age.

- 0-12
- 13-17
- 19-24
- 24-40
- 41-55
- 55+
- I don't know
- I don't answer



3.2.35 Do you get customer feedback from your e-commerce site?

- Yes
- No

3.2.36 If you get feedback, what is it about?

- Poor selection (variety) of products
- Good selection of products
- Poor graphics / navigation / etc.
- Nice graphics / navigation / etc.
- Good search capability
- Poor search capability
- Payment security related concerns
- Personal information related concerns
- Product and delivery guarantees

3.2.37 Do you have mobile access to your site?

- Yes
  - WAP
  - SMS
  - both
- No

If yes, what percentage of users accesses the site via the mobile?

- 1-5%
- 6-15%
- 16-30%
- 31-60%
- over 60%

3.2.38 Do you have on-line electronic payment transactions?

- Yes
- No

3.2.39 What do you think the critical factors for e-commerce success are? (Please rate your answers from 1 to 10, 1 being the less important factor and 10 being the most important.)

- Prompt service / Fast delivery
- Good back office integration
- A fast website
- Good graphics
- Product details
- Variety of products
- Company infrastructure
- Good return policy
- Internet Security
- To have your own delivery system
- To outsource delivery

3.2.40 What do you think the constraints for e-commerce implementation are? (Please indicate for each selection how important you believe each of the constraints is - Multiple Selection)

Constraint	Very Important	Important	A Little Important	Not Important at all
Existing company culture				
Lack of critical mass of Internet users				
Cyprus' small population				
Lack of legislation				
Lack of experts in the field				
Security problems				
Electronic payment infrastructure				
Other, please specify?				

3.2.41 Do you have back office integration (a system that integrates the processes and IT systems that support the company's operations, like stock control, purchasing, payment, etc.)?



- Yes
- No

3.2.42 If you don't have e-commerce, do you have specific plans to implement one?

- Yes
- No

3.2.43 If yes, when do you plan to implement it?

- In 3 months
- In 6 months
- In a year
- In 2 years
- In 5 years
- Don't know

3.2.44 If you have plans, how much are you willing to spend?

- Under CYP3000
- Between CYP3000 and CYP6000
- Between CYP6000 and CYP12000
- Between CYP12000 and CYP25000
- Between CYP25000 and CYP50000
- Don't know

3.2.45 What are the factors that influence your decision to have e-commerce? (Multiple Selection)

- Reduction of costs
- Revenue increase
- Ease of implementation
- Long-term return on investment
- Short-term return on investment
- My understanding of technology and the Internet
- All the benefits of electronic commerce I stated above
- e-presence



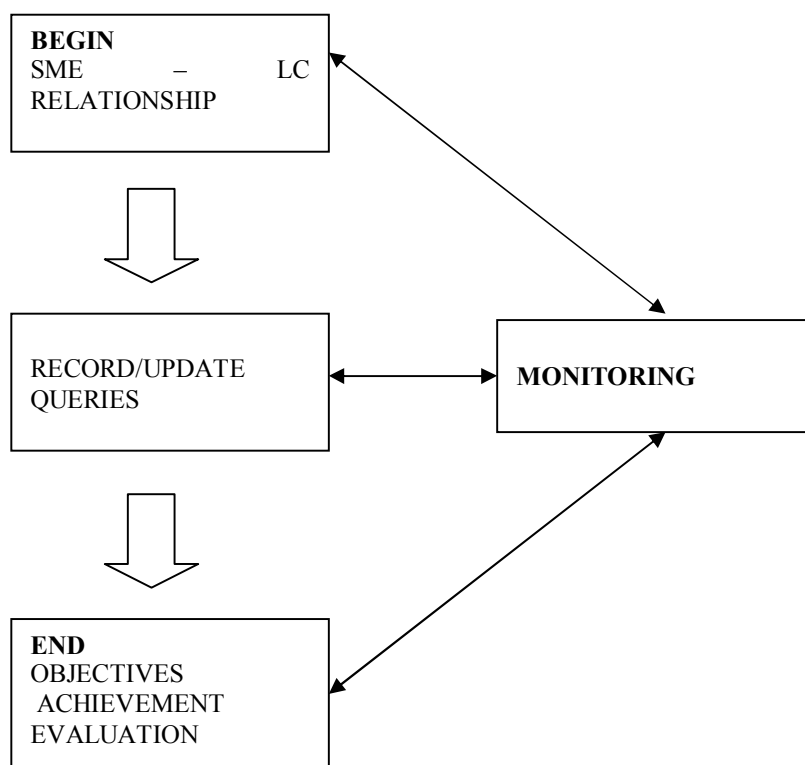
- Other, please specify

3.2.46 What are the factors that influence your decision NOT to have e-commerce?

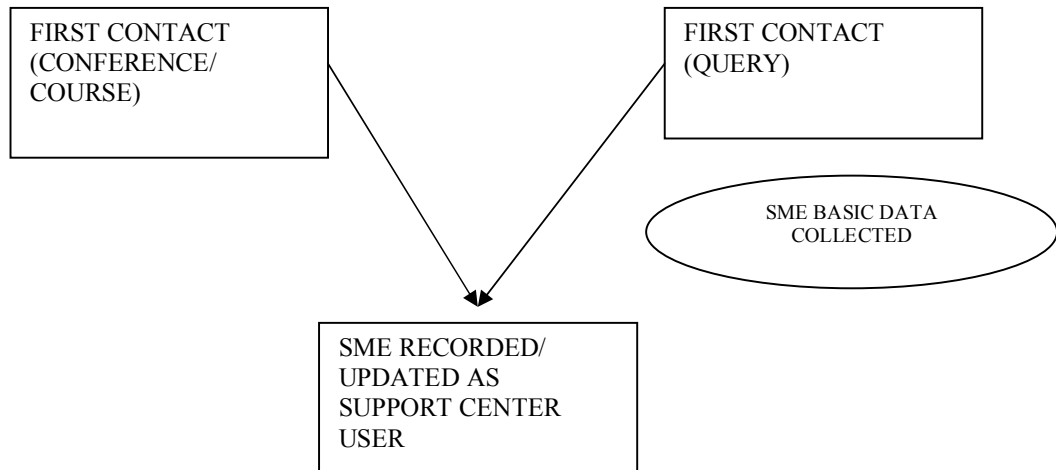
- Lack of legislation
- Lack of knowledge of what it involves and the costs
- I do not trust that an IT company in Cyprus can implement
- Afraid for website's integrity (security against hacking, etc)
- High cost
- Need for trained personnel
- Other, please specify.

## 7.3 Help Desk Flow Diagrams

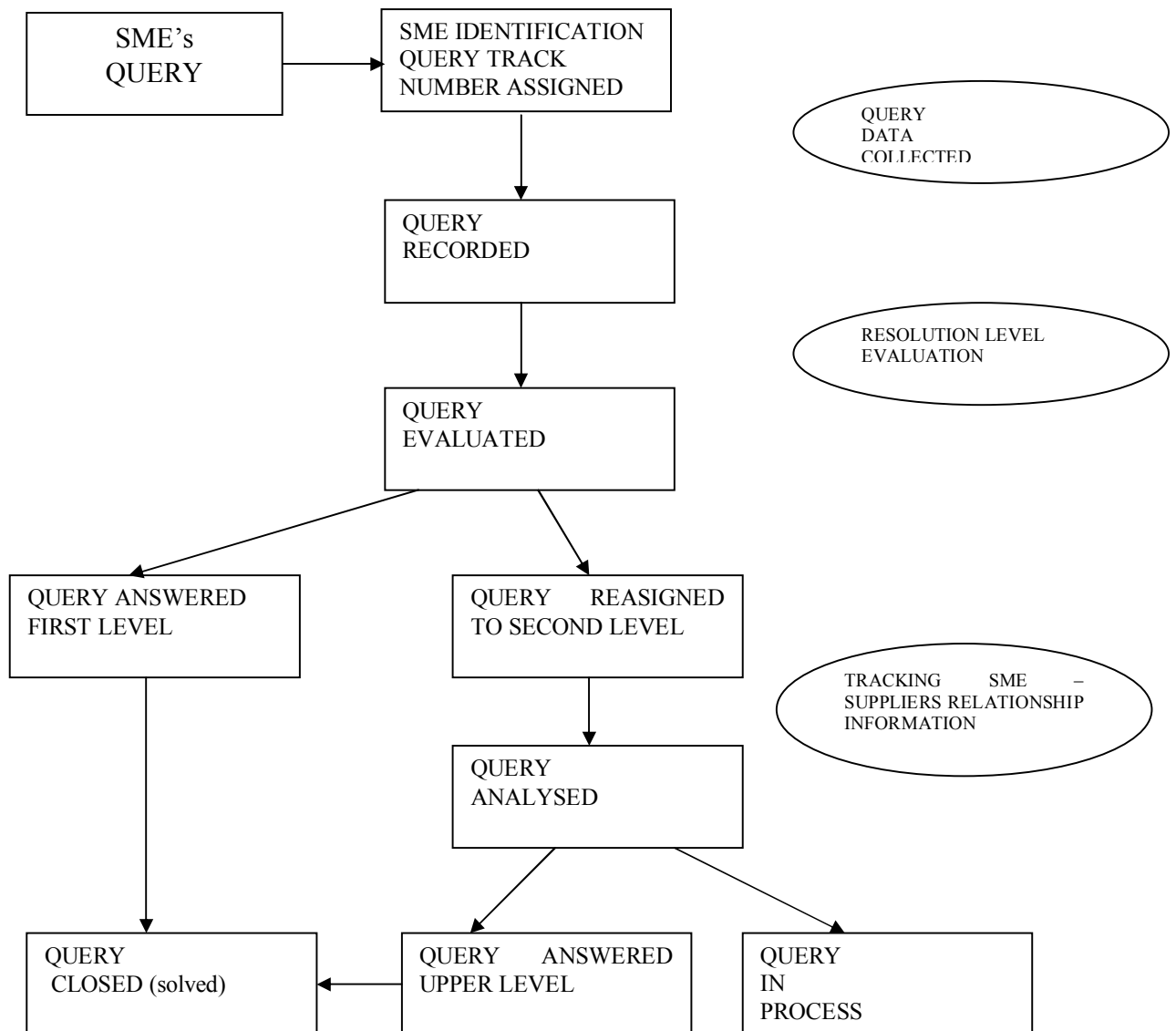
### 7.3.1 General flow of an enquiry



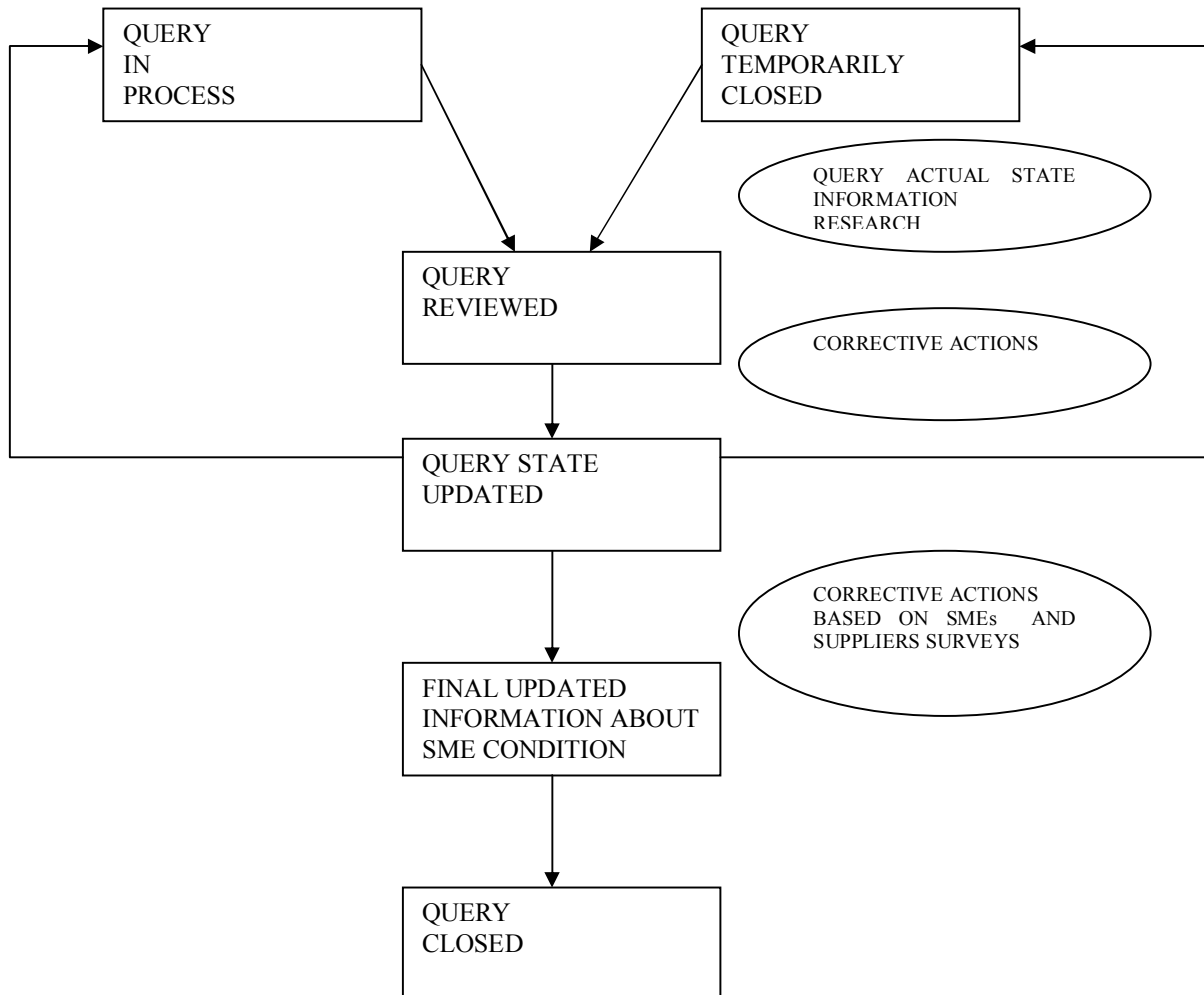
### 7.3.2 Leveraging Centre relationship flow



### 7.3.3 Enquiry logging, priority, grouping and closing flow



### 7.3.4 Enquiry monitoring (incidences flow)



### 7.3.5 Level of target achievement analysis flow

