

The Filter Project

About economic and cultural filtering of online content

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Paper presented at the EDEN 2005 Annual Conference, Helsinki, Finland

Abstracts

English Abstract

The FILTER project (see <http://www.filternetwork.org>) has duration of 24 months and will complete its work by the end of 2005. The following report covers the state-of-the-art until December 2004. The project is supported by the European Commission, as part of the *eLearning Initiative*, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/elearning>. FILTER wants to enhance affordable and fair access to high quality electronic knowledge and information to e-learners at all educational levels in Europe. Electronic information may be filtered on economic criteria set by content providers and bounded by intellectual property rights issues, as well as being bounded in an ideological or cultural tradition. The FILTER group represents colleagues from academia, government, industry, education, and training. The co-ordinating organisation is the Economisch en Sociaal Instituut of the Vrije Universiteit (ESI) in Amsterdam (NL). The partner organisations in the FILTER team are the Ministry of Education (BE), World Bank (PO), AristeiaOnline (IT), Open University (UK), Stockholm University (SE), BOLDIC (DK), CEDEFOP (GR), CompuTrain (NL), Budapest Business School (HU), SANTEC (Botswana), Norway Opening Universities (NO), Bolger (IR), Technical University of Athens (GR), Seventer, van (NL). FILTER's main focus areas are economic filtering, and ideological and cultural filtering. The above considerations lead to the following main FILTER objectives and subsequent Work Packages:

1. to identify and formulate a conceptual framework of the hidden mechanisms that hinder generally accessible, fair and affordable knowledge,
2. to demonstrate the specific economic filtering criteria and ownership mechanisms that lead to reduced educational access in different countries, leading to a comparative analysis of the filtering issues,
3. to provide the policy making communities throughout Europe with the crucial FILTER factors through interactive conferences and increased web presence,
4. to assess a viable and cost effective strategy to solve the FILTER problems, following consultation with country-experts,
5. to disseminate the FILTER results on a large scale throughout Europe.

Dutch Abstract

Samenvatting

Het FILTER project (zie <http://www.filternetwork.org>) duurt 24 maanden en wordt eind 2005 afgerond. Het volgende artikel is een verslag van het werk tot eind 2004. Het project wordt ondersteund door de European Commissie, en vormt een onderdeel van het eLearning Initiative, zie <http://europa.eu.int/comm/elearning>. FILTER wil betaalbare en eerlijke toegang tot hoogwaardige elektronische kennis en informatie bieden aan e-learners op alle onderwijsniveaus in Europa. Elektronische informatie kan gefilterd zijn op basis van economische criteria opgesteld door content providers en is vaak gebonden aan intellectueel eigendoms rechten. Ook ideologische en culturele tradities kunnen filtering veroorzaken. De FILTER group is samengesteld uit collega's uit academia, overheid, het bedrijfsleven, onderwijs en training. De co-ördinerende organisatie is het Economisch en Sociaal Instituut van de Vrije Universiteit (ESI) in Amsterdam (NL). De partner organisaties in het FILTER team zijn het Ministerie van Onderwijs (BE), World Bank (PO), AristeiaOnline (IT), Open University (UK), Stockholm University (SE), BOLDIC (DK), CEDEFOP (GR), CompuTrain (NL), Budapest Business School (HU), SANTEC (Botswana), Norway Opening Universities (NO), Bolger (IR), Technical University of Athens (GR), en Seventer, van (NL). FILTER's belangrijkste focus zijn economische filtering, ideologische en culturele filtering. De bovenstaande beschouwing leidt tot de volgende FILTER doelstellingen en opeenvolgende Werk Pakketten:

1. Identificeren en formuleren van een conceptueel raamwerk met betrekking tot de verborgen mechanismen die algemeen toegankelijke, eerlijke en betaalbare kennis belemmeren,
2. Demonstreren van de specifieke economische filtering criteria en eigenschapsmechanismen die leiden tot verminderde toegang tot onderwijsmogelijkheden in verschillende landen, resulterend in een comparatieve analyse van filtering thema's,
3. De beleidsmakers in Europa voorzien van de cruciale FILTER factoren door interactieve conferenties en toenemende zichtbaarheid op het web te bevorderen,
4. Ontwikkelen van een cost effectieve strategie om de FILTER problemen op te lossen, na het consulteren van experts in de verschillende landen,
5. Verspreiden van FILTER resultaten op grote schaal in Europa.

Norwegian Abstract

Abstract (NORWEGIAN – Norsk)

Filterprosjektet (se lenken, <http://www.filternetwork.org>) er to-årig og avsluttes 2005. Denne artikkelen beskriver prosjektets arbeid det første året. EU finansierer prosjektet innenfor rammen for *eLearning Initiative*, se mer om dette på <http://europa.eu.int/comm/elearning>. En generell målsetning er at Internettinformasjon skal være tilgjengelig og av høy kvalitet for å kunne anvendes av studerende på alle utdanningsnivåer i hele Europa. Filterprosjektet studerer filteringsmekanismer på Internett som forvrenger og minsker verdien av informasjonen. I fokus er særlig kommersielle, ideologiske eller kulturelle filtre som kan gjøre informasjonen vanskelig tilgjengelig eller ensidig. Filter-gruppen består av

representanter fra utdanningssektoren, regjeringer og næringsliv. Koordinator er the Economisch and Sociaal Instituut of the Vrije Universiteit (ESI) i Amsterdam (Holland). Partnerorganisasjoner er Utdanningsdepartementet i Belgia, World Bank (Polen), AristeiaOnline (Italia), Open University (Storbritannia), Stockholms Universitet (Sverige), BOLDIC (Danmark), CEDEFOP (Grekland), CompuTrain (Holland), Budapest Business School (Ungern), SANTEC (Botswana), Norway Opening Universities (Norge), Bolger (Irland), Technical University of Athens (Grekland), Seventer, van (Holland). Filterprosjektet har følgende målsetninger:

1. Å skape et begrepsapparat som beskriver de skjulte mekanismer som hindrer tilgjengelighet til kvalitativ informasjon via Internett, samt identifisere og eksemplifisere med typiske case,
2. I et sammenlignende internasjonalt perspektiv å vise de spesifikke økonomiske filtre som leder til begrenset og forvrengt informasjonstilgang,
3. Å gi underlag til beslutningstakere i Europa om filterfaktorer gjennom interaktive konferanser og webinformasjon,
4. Med hjelp av nasjonale eksperter å utvikle en strategi for å håndtere filterproblemene,
5. Å spre kunnskap om Filterprosjektets resultat i stor skala i Europa.

Contact person Norway: Jan Atle Toska, NorwayOpeningUniversities.

Swedish Abstract

Abstract (SWEDISH – Svenska)

Filter-projektet (se linken, <http://www.filternetwork.org>) är två-årigt och avslutas 2005. Denna artikel beskriver projektets arbete det första året. EU-finansierar projektet inom ramen för *eLearning Initiative*, se mer om detta på <http://europa.eu.int/comm/elearning>. En generell målsättning är att Internetinformation skall vara tillgänglig och av hög kvalitet för att kunna användas av studerande på alla utbildningsnivåer i hela Europa. Filterprojektet studerar filteringsmekanismer på Internet som förvränger och försämrar värdet av informationen. I fokus är särskilt kommersiella, ideologiska eller kulturella filter som kan göra informationen svårtillgänglig eller snedvriden. Filter-gruppen består av representanter från utbildningssektorn, regeringar och näringsliv. Koordinator är the Economisch and Sociaal Instituut of the Vrije Universiteit (ESI) i Amsterdam (Holland). Partnerorganisationer är Utbildningsdepartementet i Belgien, World Bank (Polen), AristeiaOnline (Italien), Open University (Storbritannien), Stockholms Universitet (Sverige), BOLDIC (Danmark), CEDEFOP (Grekland), CompuTrain (Holland), Budapest Business School (Ungern), SANTEC (Botswana), Norway Opening Universities (Norge), Bolger (Irland), Technical University of Athens (Grekland), Seventer, van (Holland). Filterprojektet har följande målsättningar:

1. Att skapa en begrepsapparat som beskriver de dolda mekanismer som hindrar tillgängligheten till kvalitativ information via Internet samt identifiera och exemplifiera med typiska fall,
2. Att i ett jämförande internationellt perspektiv visa på de specifika ekonomiska filter som leder till begränsad och förvrängd informationstillgång,
3. Att ge underlag till beslutsfattare i Europa om filterfaktorer genom interaktiva konferenser och webbinformation,
4. Att med hjälp av nationella experter utveckla en strategi för att hantera filterproblemen,
5. Att sprida kunskap om Filterprojektets resultat i stor skala i Europa.

Contact person Sweden: Henrik Hansson, Stockholm University.

Keywords

English

Internet information, biased information, economic filters, ideological filters, policy, learning, education, EU, Special Interest Group (SIG), search engines, information quality, conceptual framework

Dutch

internet informatie, gekleurde informatie, economische filters, ideologische filters, beleid, leren, onderwijs, EU, Speciale Interesse Groep (SIG), zoekmachines, kwaliteit van informatie, conceptueel raamwerk

Norwegian

Nøkkelord: Internett-informasjon, forvrengt informasjon, økonomiske filtre, ideologiske filtre, policy, læring, utdanning, EU, søkemotorer, informasjonskvalitet, begrepsapparat

Swedish

Nyckelord: Internet information, förvrängd information, ekonomiska filter, ideologiska filter, policy, lärande, utbildning, EU, sökmotorer, informationskvalitet, begrepsapparat

Workpackage I: Towards A Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework comprises three broad areas, to do with the 'Individual', to do with 'Information' and to do specifically with 'Internet Information'. Though the primary focus of the Project is on Filters at levels D, E and F, Filters at the other levels are also of some relevance. The table below give an overview of the filters and their relations. In the following text each filter level is explained and examples are given.

1. Individual

Level A: Perception Filters

Perception Filters are important for the marketing of messages, attracting attention, and getting the message across.

Level B: Knowledge and Value Filters

Knowledge and value filters include our prior knowledge, our judgments, critical thinking, and values. This filter is personal and individually constructed, based on previously acquired knowledge. When reading the underlying meaning in a text circa 50% is made up by our own pre existing knowledge – it is not there explicitly. Therefore the same information will be interpreted differently by different individuals. This is in contrast to the innate filter at level A (all human senses function in the same way).

2. Information

Level C: Pre-Internet Filters

Filtering at this level signifies all information and resources not available on the Internet, but which may be used to validate Internet information.

3. Internet Information

Level D: search and sorting-out filters

At this level Filters are used to find information among millions of web pages, both dealing and sorting out large quantities of information on a topic and sorting out the quality of that content. Notably here we find search engines and how they operate, but also browsers and their adjustable filters, specially tailored programs blocking unwanted information or screening out wanted information. A large subcategory includes security filters such as anti-spy programs, anti-spam filters, fire walls, virus protections, anti-cookie programs etc.

At this level the quantity (volume) and quality (validity) aspects of information are at stake. Internet contains both very low quality and very high quality in great volume. The quantitative filtering is enhanced by search engines, trying to structure the Internet volume of information more or less successfully. No search engine can handle all Internet information, only parts of it. What does this imply for the e-learning environment? Students may predominantly use Internet information. They may rely on the offered selection of (market driven) search engines or a standard menu of their PC or online course. If students do not read books anymore there is a risk that they only get the surface information. Students are filtered out from the deeper book information, which takes longer time to get hold of, is too expensive or is not available at all. Schools are better off because the students can use the Internet as a vast "library" for free and with easy access compared to their own poor, out of date physical libraries. At the same time teachers are complaining about the low quality of student work because they only use surface Internet information. Students (and teachers!) may filter themselves out by not using the deeper book information as was the case in the past, or by not exploring the deeper web but rather going for the easy search machine option. An anti-intellectual attitude may become more common.

Finally an issue related to the quality of information is the integrity of sources. Access to pluralistic sources is not always possible. What are the driving forces behind cultural and ideological filtering? Is the content offered in a multicultural context or are examples drawn from one culture, is the learning style culture-bound, etc.?

Level E: legal and language filters

Once the information is found we want to use it, but may be prohibited because of various reasons such as copyright, it is protected by passwords, we don't master the language etc. For obvious reasons, authors and publishers want to get paid for their work. To get real quality information on the Internet, more often the user has to pay for passwords to enter electronic journals and encyclopaedias. This filtering process increasingly excludes students and marginalizes various less privileged groups from the online learning environment.

Level F: surveillance filters

The purpose of Filters at Level F is to identify who you are, what you do, what information you seek etc. in order to market things to you, or control you. These types of surveillance are often unnoticed by the individual and not monitored by the subject. They are fought, if noticed, by a whole brand of Filters at level D, (see above) and by altering behaviour and procedures when using the Internet.

Filters at level D and Filters at level F are in a constant arms race. The privacy of the e-learner is an underestimated issue in the societal and European discourse. Very little is known by the public about electronic traces and filters to monitor the communication flows in the e-learning environment. New software and hardware to be launched in the near future will even enforce a further monitoring and filtering of users. The FILTER conceptual framework can be summarized in the following table:

1.	Individual:		
	* our senses	(Filter level A)	'Perception Filters'
	* our thinking	(Filter level B)	'Knowledge and value filters'
2.	Information:		
	* Not available on the internet	(Filter level C)	'Pre-internet filters'
3.	Internet information	(Filter level D)	'Search and sorting-out filters'
	i. Volume: quantity		
	ii. Valid: quality		
	To use information:		

iii. Copyright, language	(Filter level E)	'Legal and language filters'
iv. Privacy: covertly controlled	(Filter level F)	'Surveillance filters'

Workpackage II, Comparative Report Summary

At the start of WP-II four core issues in the filtering of knowledge on the web were highlighted, namely *language*, *search engines*, *special needs* and *minorities*. Special cases and articles were prepared in teams to accelerate the debate on these issues. These materials helped the interviewed respondents in the survey to get more background information on the four issues.

Language

All respondents state that Internet filtering is changing language use in their country or region. They specifically mention the fact that the Internet is increasing the use of the English language at the expense of the native language. English doesn't only replace the native language, it also merges with other languages into new varieties, like 'Spanglish' and 'Denglish', a mixture of Dutch and English. Two respondents mention the fact that it is not the Internet as such that is changing language, but rather mobile phones (SMS-language). The merging of written and spoken text as in SMS and chat, results in a different mode for written language with more abbreviations, more English words, new words, less punctuation, and use of numbers as words. One respondent pointed out that the Internet in the future will be used more and more as a medium of speech. This development will have its own, possibly destabilizing, effect on languages, as opposed to the stabilizing effect of written language. A final positive effect mentioned by a respondent is that the Internet helps to preserve local dialects and it stimulates written language.

The digital game is another Internet-factor influencing language change and difficult to isolate. Digital games can be played online, offline (CD-ROM), via TV using a special box and hand controls such as X-box, Game Cube, Play station, or by using mobile phones. The new generation grows up with this environment and their language is clearly affected by it. They use the special vocabulary that is needed in order to learn the computer English in order to play independently.

Two other factors influencing language changes are the need to communicate faster and to convey more in each message. To achieve this, we use an increasing array of personal communications tools, compress the language itself and substitute text with images. Acronyms are typical of our time; via these, complex names and explanations can be avoided, but without context they become meaningless. The Internet site Acronym finder lists more than 344,000 acronyms. If we type ASAP, there are 73 definitions depending on context among others: "As Soon As Possible", "A Stupid Acting Person", "After School Activities Program" and "Always Stop and Pray". Sometimes the abbreviations hide the meaning and only a few know the origin of the term. In IT, there's an abundance of these magical words, such as TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), LAN (Local Area Network), and WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get).

Technology itself encourages abrupt and abbreviated language use, because in some communication modes it is necessary in order to get across in reasonable time. In chat forums and other text-based digital areas, a highly coded language is used, incomprehensible for outsiders. Some examples from chat abbreviations include IGP (I Gotta Pee), LHO (Laughing Head Off), ^5 (High Five) and <o><o> (staring). SMS services include language translations coded in the following ways: E2F English-to-French, E2G English-to-German, E2I English-to-Italian, E2S English-to-Spanish and E2P English-to-Portuguese. Some French SMS-language examples include "Qltur" for "culture," "10ver6T" for "diversité" and "6QriT" for "sécurité" (DW-World, 2004). Whole sentences can be said with just one abbreviated word, and numbers are used because of their shorter form for spoken sounds. E-mail has its own language, a mixture of written and spoken language, mostly written informally. A study reported by BBC (2003) indicated that traditional greetings, as "hello" and "goodbye," are disappearing in e-mail. Instead, slang and universal loanwords are used, so-called "globespeak." Characteristics of specific languages may diminish in "globespeak." There has also been a detectable decline of etiquette in online conversation and correspondence. This loss of "netiquette" is a source of concern for many users, because in many cultures and languages, the medium is still the message.

Search engines

FILTER identified that personalization of search actions may lead to unwanted filtering of information. Once a person is identified by the search engine as part of a niche market, business rules are followed that prescribe what content to emphasize. This can lead to de-emphasizing, filtering out, or hiding content that a particular person is looking for. Other information is filtered in and emphasized. So, personalization may conflict with the desire to receive all available information. In the case of the ABN-AMRO Bank, FILTER found that their personalised intranet became useless because the information the bank employees could gather was very limited. In the survey the contributors mentioned very little debate in their country or region about the pro's or con's of personalised searching on the web. People are either not aware of the issues or it is simply ignored. One of the respondents stated "I think the main problem discussed is not "the desire to receive all available information", but how to receive less but still acceptable quality of information. The burn-out aspects of new technology due to speed and information overload is the main issue." Some techniques on personalized search debated in Denmark include; (a) segmented personalizing, where customer-data is segmented according to buying behaviour; these data are then used to reach the customers again in the future, (b) behaviour agents; customer clicks are transferred to a personal profile, (c) explicit collaborative filtering, where the customer is expressing his or her interest, and (d) implicit collaborative filtering, where homepages recognize customer patterns and match their needs. The most used educational search engines are found on the portal of the Danish Ministry of Education <http://www.emu.dk>. EMU is in the top 25 most used home pages in Denmark. <http://www.vidar.dk> is a public database of all adult education in Denmark. VIDART contains more than 4,500 different educational possibilities and more than 50,000 educational offers on an annual basis.

In The Netherlands public awareness is raised by authors such as Francisco van Jole and Arjan Dasselaar, though only an elite group in Dutch society is reached yet. Three respondents mentioned there is no survey known to them about search engines. In The Netherlands a critical survey was published by Consumentengids (2004). In Swedentechnology magazines regularly do tests such as the magazine Computer, <http://computersweden.idg.se>. The Open University (UK) is stimulating digital literacy through an online course. It helps people to make sense of information in the Information Age. A good practice case of a fair search engine is developed by the Norway Opening Universities' (NOU) (<http://agent.universitet.no>), a free and non-sponsored search engine relevant to higher education courses. The most used search engines mentioned by respondents are Google, Yahoo, Ilse, Kvasir, Alltheweb and MSN. In Sweden trusted information can be found via <http://www.ne.se/>. However, this site offers pay service and therefore may lock people out from information. Depending on the type of

information sought after special search engines can be consulted, agencies and public sites may provide the most trusted information, but also strong brand names in private industry. The organisations that risk losing credibility if transmitting biased information can be trusted the most. Reputation is an important aspect when choosing and using information source. None of the respondents was aware of any special policy on the use of search engines. One respondent though mentions the fact that some schools do develop practical guides relating to the use of the Internet (for teachers and pupils) including the use of search engines. But this practical approach cannot be seen as a strategic policy. In Sweden there is no policy and many teachers provide their selection and judgement of search engines to students. The Open University UK has developed a good digital literacy course, see their Literacy Unit site:

<http://library.open.ac.uk/help/infolitunit.html>. The objectives include: (1) Raising awareness of the importance of information literacy skills (2) Helping Open University staff to feel confident with their own skills (3) Integrating information literacy skills into the curriculum (4) Developing a research portfolio in information literacy. Two digital literacy courses worth mentioning are MOSAIC and SAFARI: MOSAIC (Making Sense of Information in the Connected Age) is a 12 week, online course offered by the Library in conjunction with the Faculty of Education and Language Studies, which attracts 10 credit points. Support is provided by a team of study advisors via the 'phone, email and First Class. The assessment is in the form of a portfolio which follows through the process of searching for information. SAFARI is the Open University Library's information skills tutorial, an interactive, web-based teaching package for students, tutors, and staff, launched in January 2001. It is aimed at helping people to feel more confident about finding, evaluating, and using information. Safari can be used by in a variety of ways - as a training package, working through each of the seven sections in order, or by dipping in to specific topics of interest.

Special needs

The respondents were asked about policy development in their country or region in relation to assisting access to the Internet for people with special needs, for example learners with visual impairment.

Barriers - Respondents were asked to review a website in order to identify any barriers such as 'missing text equivalents' or 'inaccessible online forms' which would impede access for learners with visual impairment. The reviewed websites are: <http://www.open.ac.uk>, <http://www.kennisnet.nl>, <http://www.ou.nl>, <http://www.universitet.no>. The Open University in the United Kingdom (OU/UK) is very advanced in this respect and has a policy to deal with students with a wide variety of special needs. The University has its own Centre for Assistive Technology and Enabling Research (CATER). CATER supports the development of an accessible curriculum through a number of ongoing projects. It also provides ongoing staff development together with the development of enhanced technology based services for people with special needs. The OU/UK website (see <http://www.open.ac.uk>) has a large range of facilities for disabled students: including those who are blind or partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing, people with restricted mobility or manual dexterity, with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties, with mental health difficulties, with specific medical conditions, or with impaired speech. Adaptations of the curriculum include the tape-recording or video taping of course material, the conversion of printed texts into e-books thus enabling texts to be read on screen with the aid of a screen reader, as well as the use of particular programme applications to suit the needs of users with impaired mobility. The OU/UK has a Learner's Guide Services for Disabled Students website at <http://www3.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability/index.htm>. More than 8,700 disabled students – a figure higher than the entire student populations of some UK universities – currently benefit from the Open University's pioneering work in transforming higher education.

Access - As far as access to online forms is concerned, the reviewed websites failed to observe the design guidelines. The result is that users with disabilities are unable to complete online forms and therefore may be filtered out of benefiting from what the site is offering. Furthermore when respondents checked the websites for inaccessible device restrictions (situations where only the mouse can be used to interact with the website), only one respondent noted that there was an alternative to using the mouse (tab and enter). For people with visual or motor disability inaccessible device restrictions impede access to the Internet. In the Netherlands a project was launched by the Ministry of Culture and Education entitled *Drempels Weg* (translated "Delete Barriers") to enhance the accessibility of websites for disabled people. *Drempels Weg* makes organisations and public in general more aware of the access problems for disabled people and assists organisations in making their sites accessible. In Ireland, the Irish National Disability Authority outlines proposals by Government in 1999 in its 'Report of the Inter-Departmental Implementation Group on the Information Society' which recommends that "Websites should be designed and operated in accordance with the needs of users" and "the key principle underlining accessibility is that websites should be easy for everyone to use, including people with a disability" (NDA, nd). However, an extensive survey carried out by McMullin (2003) which analysed over 159 Irish websites found that 100% failed to meet the professional practice WCAG-AA accessibility standard; 94% failed to meet the minimum WCAG-A accessibility standard, and at least 90% failed to meet minimal conformance with other generic technical standards for web interoperability. An Omnibus Survey carried out in Northern Ireland found that only 22% of households actually had computers and access to the Internet, a further 12% had computers but no access to the Internet, with the remaining 66% not having home computers at all. The Survey also found that individuals without a disability are almost twice as likely as individuals with disability to access the Internet. In Spain, Project FOTEUMIDIS, initiated in 1997, draws on all of UNED's media to deliver audio and video instruction through the RDSI public line (García Aretio, 1998). This university-level teaching is directed towards those affected by some form of disability. The objective is to make it possible for people with a disability to study via multi-video conference through RDSI and so obtain the greatest results with the least effort. Collaborating with UNED in this project are the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (INSERSO), Telefónica, the ONCE foundation, IBM, Alcer Murcia, and INSALUD. (Lorenzo García Aretio, Chair in Distance Education, UNESCO, <http://www.irrodl.org/content/v2.1/aretio.html>, Education for the Physically Handicapped, Foteumidis).

Minorities

Following the case on minority languages and the use of the Internet, illustrated by the Sami people in Norway, the respondents first were asked to reflect on the educational measures, including the use of internet, in order to enhance the position of minority language(s) in their country or region. The responses vary in depth and length. Minority languages are both filtered out (disappearing) and filtered in (strengthened) if the Internet helps speakers of a minority language to get connected, communicate, help and educate each other. Which effect is more apparent, or what the criteria are is not yet clear. In the UK legislation protects the translation of all materials in Welsh at the university. There is no information about the Internet in general. In the Netherlands the respondents claim that Dutch has priority. Some information is translated into Frisian for example (spoken in the North), but for Limburgs (spoken in the South) the respondents found no proof of official educational measures. Minority languages of immigrants (Turkish, Moroccan) are less present. Denmark knows a network for language minorities called FINFO offering a link-index to information for specific language groups. FINFO works with 11 languages: Danish, Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Kurdian, Somali, Persian, Turkish, Vietnamese, English,

Russian, Urdu and Tamil. Kvinde.FINFO.DK (translated: Female.FINFO) is an Internet Portal for women between 20 and 35 years with an ethnic background, in which 30 institutions and organisations participate. A common entry to relevant information is enhanced. Kvinde.FINFO.dk wants to ensure the access to information on equal terms to encourage the integration of ethnic groups in the Danish society.

In Norway measures are taken to preserve the Sami language. Furthermore the respondents were asked to mention the possible positive effects of the Internet regarding the enhancement of the position of this (these) language(s). Most respondents feel that the Internet has a positive role in preserving minority languages. It helps people to find each other, to keep the language alive and to educate 'new' users, compare youngsters that have not learned the language of their ancestors while growing up, but at a later life stage show an interest in doing so.

Other positive effects:

- Enables small scattered groups of speakers to communicate and stay in contact
- Availability of the minority language heritage including culture and history online – free, easy, fast, and directly distributed where and when one wants the information
- Active production of language products online – reaching a wide audience
- Awareness, access and closeness to a multitude of languages and their speakers
- Small scale production, distribution in minority languages is possible, cheap, easy and fast. The gap between professional and amateur producers decreases.
- The voice of the few and their particular views can be enforced and carried through the media noise.
- Curiosity – revival of languages, people who are interested in small languages can easily learn and find information about them
- Distance education – formal courses with supervision and selected material is available
- Multimedia – listen and speak, read and write, see and act – many modes are available when learning a language as opposed to the old media – the printed book, simply text.
- Learning languages for fun in informal ways via the Internet is possible

Possible negative effects of the Internet regarding the position of this (these) language(s) are:

- English dominating, less information available in minority languages
- Risk of a two sphere development
- The economic, technical, global communication language = English, "the big world" contrasts the social and cultural language = minority language, "the small world"
- The risk of language extinctions – to maintain one or several extra languages requires a lot of effort.

What's Next?

In WP-III an interactive symposium 'Globalisation and the Freedom of Knowledge' was organised in The Hague on 10 December 2004, see full report at <http://www.haagsehogeschool.nl/HaagseHogeschool/Lectoraten/HumanResourcesManagement/index.xml>. Web presence increases through active participation in e-platforms. To increase FILTER co-operation, awareness and dialogue throughout Europe, live and electronic conferences on e-platforms such as of the EU (http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=6075&doclng=6&menuzone=2), CEDEFOP, European Training Village (the Quality Forum, <http://www.trainingvillage.gr>) will be facilitated, inviting new partners, on different European locations, leading to a summary report. At the ETV site a virtual discussion will be launched on the issue of e-filtering and national educational portals (see below). During WP IV expert interviews and strategy developments are planned: FILTER project partners will conduct in depth interviews with experts/practitioners in their country (decision-makers, regulating authorities, suppliers of knowledge, IPR experts, e-content developers, search engine experts) to understand and assess regional and social practices for economic filtering of electronic knowledge. By the expert interviews strategy information will be gathered for feedback purposes. During the final Work package stage V product development and dissemination is planned. Development of products such as guidelines reports for industry and policymakers, video clips, CD ROMS, training and awareness skills for e-learning purposes, and web tools.

e-Filtering and national educational portals

After one year of intensive FILTER study, a core issue became the role of national educational portals in filtering-in and filtering-out content. Why is this such an important issue in the FILTER study? The establishment of educational portals may be regarded as a way of reducing complexity and sheltering users from information overload. Educational portals may be seen as instruments of conscious or "planned" filtering or content selection efforts. This may be regarded as something positive, helping end users to a more or less highly structured access to quality assured and relevant content. Every portal, however, may also be regarded with some suspicion, as possibly being biased, one-sided, unfair etc. In particular high qualified professionals are sensible to "paternalistic" content where the portal decides "this is good for you". The selection criteria and mechanisms are therefore important issues for the FILTER project and subsequently the portal target groups, i.e. the users of portals of any age. Critical awareness raising is needed among users to reflect on the criteria and mechanisms for selecting and developing the content of the portals in question.

Regarding the success or lack of success of educational portals, as a general hypothesis we suppose it is easier for educational portals related to the activities of specific institutions of education like universities to succeed. On the other hand, "stand-alone" national (or international) portals trying to serve a large variety of end users or target groups, are less easily successful. Universities or schools in general are well established coalitions of stakeholders (students, teachers etc.) with research and pedagogical resources and technological infrastructure. An institutional portal may be successful to the extent that it is integrated in the teaching and learning activity of its host institution and at the same time has an international outreach in its content and perspective. Given the nature of educational institutions, however, the establishment of a successful portal may still be a slow and incremental process due to factors like lack of sufficient funding, insufficient incentive systems, lack of engagement from staff, disagreements on technology, choice of standards etc.

For national educational portals it seems even harder to be successful. As mentioned before, some national portal initiatives have not been successful. Possible reasons for this may be that the portal initiatives have been too top-down. Or may be the reason is lack of market research among possible key stakeholders like students and teachers, before establishing the portal. Another reason may be competition between the portal itself and key stakeholders like the universities or schools. As mentioned before, national portals of learning resources to be used by pupils and teachers in primary education seem so far to be more

successful than higher education portals. The reasons for this may be twofold: Portals aimed at primary education have specific target groups with more or less clearly defined needs, and the relation between the portals and the schools using the portal services is one of complementarity rather than competition.

Regarding the development and use of educational portals, we are still in an early stage of experimentation. As mentioned before, educational portals may be seen as instruments of conscious or "planned" filtering or content selection efforts, helping end users to access relevant content. Regarding questions about filtering or content selection mechanisms, it is important that the portals are as transparent as possible about the criteria and mechanisms used in the process of content selection. As part of the FILTER project we therefore want to invite people involved in running and using some of the national educational portals in Europe to reflect on and discuss the criteria and methods used for selecting and developing the content of their portals.

Recommendations

At the end of the project it would be interesting to discuss the conceptual framework's suitability in regard of further explorations of filtering issues after the project is finished, add the criteria 'reliable' and 'affordable' content to the access debate to safeguard the quality of content. Awareness raising courses to compare and contrast ways in which websites from different knowledge origins construct content about all kinds of societal issues e.g. the environment, language needs, care for elderly people are important. Does the presented content on these websites make sense to people in another country or knowledge tradition? Further in-depth study on how search engines, one of the core tools in education, reinforce biased effects. Also, earmarking and developing qualified search engines with proven fair and reliable methods of ranking, and developing good online content that is relevant for different target groups. It is important to further prevent IPR lock-in and lock-out effects by developing further Open Source and public domain content and developing e-skills in different target group, including skills in active and critical use of the Internet. Furthermore to establish adequate legal arrangements for Digital Rights Management and Intellectual Property Rights, and encourage communities of practice for learning best or good practice in the multiple use of the Internet for learning purposes. A lot has been accomplished in 2004, and 2005 will be the real harvest time for the FILTER project.

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