



# Towards what Knowledge Society?

II ONLINE Congress of the Observatory  
for the Cyber Society [2-14.11.2004]

## Summary and Conclusions GT-70

November 2004

### Gender Equality : creation of Hispanic Networks for Development

#### 1. Summary

##### Main Issues

###### Main issues or topics assessed by the Group

Women's Rights and Gender Equality should be considered the building blocks of the Knowledge Society we are all creating, a truly equitable Society stimulating knowledge and fighting poverty, an encompassing and diverse society that may eliminate any existing gap based on gender, cultural, social, technological and financial traits.

Therefore, the Working Group called "**Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Equality: creation of Hispanic Networks for Development ('Inclusión, Diversidad y Equidad de Género: creando REDES hispanas para el desarrollo')**" [GT 70] raised an open discussion on the knowledge society, focusing on three core necessities:

- the democratization of the access to knowledge and its dissemination,
- a revision of the criteria used to define and use Information Technologies as the Knowledge Society develops,
- the creation of NETWORKS for the exchange of knowledge and experiences from and within the Hispanic community and devising inclusive proposals within the Knowledge Society.

REFERENCES: GT 70 Presentation and documents, papers, active links and this document:

<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup.php?idioma=es&id=70> o

Starting point for discussion: <http://www.genderwsis.org>

##### Papers in context

###### Context of papers presented.

The main proposal set forth by the Working Group was the creation of NETWORKS as a strategy for developing Gender Equality, therefore the 4 interesting and convincing papers presented focused on the topic: **The Internet and women's networks.**

- [Eva Maria González Hernández](#) and [Martha Burkle](#) (TEC Campus Guadalajara, Mexico) presented a paper called **Women's digital networks as new areas for social participation ('Redes electrónicas de mujeres como nuevos espacios de participación social')** focusing first on the quality criteria of "World Best Website Awards" used for the assessment and self-assessment of websites and then examining the most relevant features provided by Websites, thus allowing to assess the **actual potential of a website** as an open area for the interaction and participation of women with regard to social change.

- A more specific proposal on how open networks facilitate interaction was the presentation

of an actual experience of Women Working with Networks, presented in the paper entitled **collective creation of the declaration "We demand a Gender concept" ('creación colectiva del manifiesto "Reivindicamos el concepto de Género"')** by Carmen Castro and Anne le Maignan ([SinGENERODEDUDAS.com](http://SinGENERODEDUDAS.com) and [RED.GeneroUrban](http://RED.GeneroUrban), Spain and Spanish-speaking countries), which described a recent self-managed experience (May-July 2004) via 2 consolidated newsgroups, using Websites and Blogs as electronic platforms for alert broadcast, gender awareness, activism and its contribution to the collective creation of knowledge.

- With the purpose of bringing "Visibility" to the knowledge of women, and particularly to reconstruct the archetype of the European and Panamerican Eve, the **E-Virgins ('E-virgenes')** installation by [M<sup>a</sup> Angustias Bertomeu Martínez E-Leuisis.net](http://Ma.Angustias.Bertomeu.Martinez.E-Leuisis.net), Spain, America) was presented, where two complementary digital shows were representing women as subjects of technology assumed by social transmission and women working on the restoration of the lost feminine spheres. The E-Virgins installation is being exhibited throughout the world and is also permanently on show at the Website of E-Leuisis.net.
  
- Finally, [Laura Margarita Elías Mortera \(Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, Mexico\)](http://Laura.Margarita.Elías.Mortera.Instituto.Tecnológico.de.Estudios.Superiores.de.Monterrey) discussed topics such as **Globalization, women's collectives and the Nation-state: public interest and the knowledge society ('La globalización, los colectivos de mujeres y la reconfiguración del Estado nación: el interés común y las sociedades del conocimiento')**, based on the "Think globally and act locally" paradigm and then raising several questions about the reconfiguration of the relationships between Nation-States, globalization, Civil Society and the interaction of women collectively organized using NETWORKS.

REFERENCES:

- GT 70 Papers:

[http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup\\_comunicacions.php?idioma=es&id=70](http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup_comunicacions.php?idioma=es&id=70)

## Assessment of the discussion forum

### Topics and discussions developed throughout the forum .

Different topics were established in order to discuss the questions arising from the papers and presentations, within the initial scope of the Working Group.

The core issue for the GT was Gender Equality and Hispanic Networks for Development, however all the men registered in the group simply readers and did not participate in the discussion. Although the number of attendees was low (15 people out of 115 registered, coming from X countries of Latin America and Europe, took the floor, and these were mostly from Spain, Mexico and Argentina), the active participants have described the experiences of nearly a hundred organizations, either academic or militant, as well as their own experiences as users, thus helping focus the discussion on two main topics:

- 1.- **women's networks from a practical point of view and from a theoretical point of view**
- 2.- **participation in and occupation of the cyberspace by men and women,**

Among all conversation topics arising from the discussion, we may point out the following points focusing on the abovementioned two topics of interest

□ **A methodology for Communication: by creating a NETWORK, we grow as individuals**

- The first step is to introduce oneself, in order to generate the desired communication model: particularly, it shall include the emotional aspects, erasing the anchored social stereotype where women and "machines" are not compatible, it shall overcome fears and suspicions towards ITCs.
- Empathy is essential for the operability of women's electronic networks. Creating networks: an Utopia? Can they be considered as practice communities?
- In the real world, effective networks take some time to grow and develop, likewise, electronic networks are networks of organizations and individuals governed by social rules. Questions: What happens after the creation of the NETWORK? Where can we meet again?
- The end of the Congress will mean a halt, we hope only temporarily; as most of the discussions opened within this group will develop further between all individuals interested in the development of a process where Gender Equality dominates the agenda and content proposals for the Knowledge Society
- A more active participation of Women within the network is needed . To which extent? Many militant attendees have in common their **exhaustion**. "The body knows and sends messages". Is it possible to reconcile work, activism, family and personal life?

□ **Equitable participation in decision-making for shaping the Information Society**

- From an inclusive point of view, the Information Society should embrace features guaranteeing that the effective democratization of information and empowerment are at the core of development. However, in the Internet, democratization does not exist without free access and free software.
- The design and usage of the Internet has been based upon masculine parameters. Women are still left out of the world of technological design and development and are thus alien to decision-making spheres. The barriers encountered by women on their march towards key technological decision-taking positions are known as the "Glass ceiling", which reveals more about its invisibility than its fragility.
- Such invisibility becomes evident by just looking at the manipulation of the existing indicators. There is a "global" trend of narrowing the gap between male and female users which must however be clarified, e.g., in Europe, the ratio of men using the Internet is double the number of women for people aged 50 or more. On the other hand, female students in the fields of computer science or mathematics are still a minority (30% in Spain), the progression is not linear, there are no miracles here. There can even be some backlashes, as indicated by the figures in computer science students attending the Universidad Polit3cnica de Catalu1a...
- - **Indicators integrating gender perspective:** when considering the usual Internet indicators for the Observatory **Red.es** website there is not a single indicator among the top 10 reference indicators showing itemized results by gender. The indicator

called "Internet users in Spain ('Internautas en España')" does not itemize the figures. However, there are reports on "The Internet in Spanish Households ('Internet en los hogares españoles')" which do take into account parameters such as age, gender, income, education, and regions like Catalonia have published these figures. On the other hand, the **RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE dated February 18th 2003 on the implementation of the plan eEurope 2005** (published 28 02 2003 – Official Gazette of the European Community, (2003/C 48/02)) explicitly points out the need for political indicators: "eEurope 2005 should include a limited number of political indicators associated to the political actions within eEurope 2005, thus allowing to focus on these results. The main indicators related to political objectives should come together with additional statistical indicators providing data for further analysis, e.g., age, gender, size, sector. Comparisons with other non-EC countries are needed in order to establish reference points thus allowing a comparison of the European Union with top world countries regarding this matter. The results of the comparative assessment shall be published as soon as possible via the eEurope website".

**Participation in Networks: How are men and women [as individuals and as groups] taking up Cyberspace?**

- With regard to the Information Society, cyberspace is the new dimension of "public space", therefore, it should be interesting to analyze how behavioral patterns are evolving as regards the participation and the representation of men and women. Women and men participate in and use cyberspace in different ways; both are connected, navigate, subscribe to bulletin boards and newsgroups, register in discussion forums although their voices are heard differently.
- There is a need for more active participation of women in networks, discussion areas and the shaping or reshaping of society towards horizontal structures.
- Throughout the discussion, quantitative data were shared, itemized by gender in Europe, Spain, Catalonia and other countries.
- Most of the female users of the Internet are teenagers logging on websites for "women" without any gender perspective, protected by the neutral language of HTML.

**The NETWORKS as a strategic tool for development: How to build the empowerment of Women's electronic NETWORKS thus impacting on the strategy for development?**

- Public electronic networks are an experience in strengthening civil organizations that promote positive action and strategic alliances.
- Women's electronic NETWORKS leading to "private" areas interfacing with public spaces where women may participate and channel their proposals: the creation of women's networks is another aspect of the construction of Gender Identity provided by the features of the Internet.
- We should try to capitalize the resources (Internet) adapting them to our own identity until we may be able to be actually create our own models. The website, a bulletin board, a newsgroup could be appropriate vectors for the dissemination of existing opportunities. Small organizations cannot wait to know about the current opportunities through the

official reports from international organizations or governments.

- Women (either from Mexico, Spain, Canada, Argentina, India, South Africa) use the Internet to disseminate topics 'put aside' by society: sex education, gender violence, technological training for women.... Women turn to the Internet in order to gather information, talk, discuss and/or think about other issues, about the issues of others...
- Electronic NETWORKS, not necessarily restricted to women, that are focusing on human rights and development, these should be adding more Gender Equality awareness: alternatives for integration are needed for plural identities, where women and men may participate together from the perspective of gender equality.
- It should be necessary to actively trigger an active collaboration between NETWORKS: as more NETWORKS may jointly devise development strategies, the greatest chance we may have of developing a truly inclusive society.

MAIN REFERENCE:

<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/foros/foros.php?idioma=es&id=70>

OTHER REFERENCES (links, indicators, qualitative and quantitative data):

<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup.php?idioma=es&id=70#1>

## 2. Conclusions and proposals

### Towards what Knowledge Society?

**Which was the response within the GT and especially as regards the specific topics of the GT to this question?.**

The working group has focused its presentations and discussions on the construction of a knowledge society which should be inclusive, participative, open, diverse and incorporating gender equality; to this purpose, we have considered an active participation in establishing different development strategies, particularly by means of creating Hispanic NETWORKS.

Generally speaking, Hispanic knowledge society [especially whenever introducing the gender perspective] based on the tools available on the Internet, is still an emerging and scattered society with *cultural, social, technological and economic* gaps quite rooted in *the gender-based division of work and in a different socialization based on gender*. Therefore, a significant narrowing of these gaps shall need a large mobilization of civil society, governments and key economic actors involved in the development strategies.

The creation of networks (practice communities) being permanently open, plural, accessible and transparent, is a prerequisite for narrowing the digital gap between societies/communities and gender, as well for implementing the two issues discussed within the GT70: the democratization of knowledge and an equal opportunity access to the Internet and other digital resources.

REFERENCE: See the congress website at

[http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/index\\_es.html](http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/index_es.html)

### Question from the SupraGroup

**Which was the response within the GT and particularly as regards the specific topics of the GT**

to the question from the SupraGroup where you have been included? (learning, culture, communication, etc.)

The supra-group in which the OCS proposed to include the GT70 focused on the theme: **Towards new social paradigms? ('¿Hacia nuevos paradigmas sociales?')** where one of the key words was "gender". However, in view of the issues and topics proposed within the GT 70 it could also have been included in other supra-groups and especially in those focused on **Towards new forms of learning ('¿Hacia nuevas formas de aprendizaje? Towards a new democracy ('¿Hacia una nueva democracia?')** **Towards a participative society ('¿Hacia una sociedad participativa?')** **Towards new territories ('¿Hacia nuevos territorios?')** The "gender equality" concept cannot be considered as a new social paradigm, as it was first originated within the Anglo-Saxon world in the late 18th Century. Anyway, the discussion of this concept was not the objective of this GT whereas a direct relationship was established between the group discussions, the meaning of advancing towards a Knowledge Society with Gender Equality and the new social paradigm, summarized as SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, that should necessarily be assumed by citizens, governments and other cultural, social and economic actors, being at the core of changes having an impact on socially accepted cultural values, on the criteria for the resource distribution and access, on learning systems and on participation channels, so that the strategy of sharing on a gender equality basis should be the actual implementation of the changes foreseen.

REFERENCE SupraGroups:

<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/supragrups.php?idioma=es>

## Conclusions

The following are several conclusions that could help devise strategies to be further developed towards a **Knowledge Society with Gender Equality**:

- ❑ Need of guarantees ensuring an effective democratization of information and knowledge as well as equal opportunity access to the Internet and digital resources for women and men.
- ❑ Need of considering women for decision-making with regard to ITC design and usability.
- ❑ Need to develop Gender Indicators for the Information and Knowledge Society.
- ❑ Need to stimulate a more active participation of women in the network, in order to shape a new, horizontally structured society.

The following are some of the conclusions/points that may help in **further building Hispanic networks for development with a gender perspective**:

- ❑ Stimulating the creation of open and permanent forums on ITCs and gender issues.
- ❑ Need of support and resources from institutions allowing the sustainability of the digital NETWORKS for gender equality: financing, micro-loans for NETWORK projects.
- ❑ Promoting the participation of digital NETWORKS for gender equality in Conferences focusing on the Information Society.

### LINKS FOR NETWORK CREATION

- ☺ COORDINATORS:  
<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup.php?idioma=es&id=70#C>.
- ☺ REFERENCES AND SUPPORT COMMITTEE:  
<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/grups/grup.php?idioma=es&id=70#B>.
- ☺ ACTIVE DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS:  
<http://www.cibersociedad.net/congres2004/foros/foros.php?idioma=es&id=70>

## Guidelines and proposals

Within the GT and as regards the specific topics of the GT, which proposals, guidelines, etc., do you think could be submitted to administrative bodies and governments?

**Proposals for further advancement towards a truly equitable Society, which may stimulate knowledge and eliminate poverty, an all inclusive and diverse society, where gender-based cultural, social, technological and economic gaps have been removed:**

- ❑ **Raising the awareness** of government and political organizations, NGOs, academia, business, media... institutions operating within one or more of the following fields: Information and Knowledge Society, new Communication and Information Technologies, Education, Gender Equality.

#### PRACTICAL STEPS TO TRIGGER THE PROCESS

- As the first step, generating indicators used to monitor access, usage and creation of content and digital resources itemized by gender.
- Generating a preliminary status report : gender-based assessment.

- ❑ Participating in, relying on or creating whenever they do not exist, national and regional or macro-regional multi-sector dissemination **NETWORKS** and Working Groups, strengthening ties with organizations of Spanish-speaking countries, creating gateways, facilitating access to content, to English-speaking technologies, European networks, GC WSIS....

#### PRACTICAL STEPS TO TRIGGER THE PROCESS

- Taking into account the existing Women's **NETWORKS** which are actively working on gender equality issues, with regard to the processes prior to political decision-taking in the fields of ICT and the Knowledge Society.
- Strengthening initiatives focusing on digital **NETWORKS** for gender equality.

- ❑ Facilitating the inclusion of women within the **construction and usage of the Information Society / Knowledge Society and ITC** supporting the practices and the ongoing and/or innovative research by means of an infrastructure providing support, financing, widespread invitation to proposals, micro-loans and any necessary means and ways...

#### PRACTICAL STEPS TO TRIGGER THE PROCESS

- Implementing a support infrastructure.
- Establishing an agenda agreed with women's digital **NETWORKS** for gender equality.