

e-Business Adviser Handbook

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A handbook for business advisers assisting small and medium sized enterprise entering or improving e-Business.

Issued by the USHER project. <http://www.usherproject.org.uk>

Annex – 1 – e-Business Support Networks

ANNEX 1. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS

ANNEX 1.1. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS IN ATHENS

The aim of this section is to present how e-business advisory practice is performed in the region of Athens. Also e-business support organizations and networks will be reported.

There are several agencies and bodies in the whole Athens region supporting SMEs entry to e-Business. They are classified in two main categories commercial (profit) and non-profit organizations. Commercial organizations are mainly ISPs and Software Houses that provide the infrastructure, knowledge and support to SMEs to introduce e-business. Non-profit organizations are mainly public organizations that are supported by the government, local authorities or other public bodies that support SMEs mainly with knowledge, information, advices and aid programs for e-business.

I. Commercial (Profit) Organizations

24 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and 73 Software Houses have been reported in the region of Athens that provide support and counseling on e-business development. Their support concerns basically technology issues, like ICT tools, Web Hosting of e-business, E-Commerce Software, Web applications, etc. More recently a few e-business support companies have appeared that provide more specialized and integrated support for e-business processes concerning B2C and also B2B (like B2B auctions, e-marketplaces, etc.) Such companies are:

- www.cosmo-one.gr
- www.onianet.gr
- www.yassas.com
- www.be24.com

Concerning support for applications of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and its integration with the front office applications of e-business like Web Marketing and Customer Order Processing, this is provided by Software Houses and Software Vendors who promote ERP software packages in the region. The integration of the front office of e-business with the back office and the rest supply chain requires significant support at several levels within an enterprise, since such integration issues concern the existence of high degree of automation of the production management processes like Master Production Scheduling, Inventory Management, Capacity Planning, Material Requirements Planning (MRP), etc. Anyway such efforts for integration have started mainly by larger enterprises.

II. Non-Profit / Public Organizations

This category includes agencies and bodies that are supported by the government, by the local authorities and other public or non-profit organizations, like Chambers. An effort has been applied at several levels for the promotion of e-business in the region.

Governmental support

The Greek Government has applied several initiatives at national and regional level for promoting e-business and for the support of SMEs entering e-business world. Such initiatives and programs are reported next:

1. **E-Business Forum** – This forum is under the supervision of the General Secretariat of Industry of the Greek Ministry of Development (www.ebusinessforum.gr). It aims to support e-business development in Greece through the cooperation of interested parties and also the Greek state. Already it has organized work groups concerning several issues like security, e-marketplaces, mobile e-commerce and has also organized workshops and meetings concerning e-business development.
2. **Go-online** – This is an action supported also by the General Secretariat of Industry of the Greek Ministry of Development (www.go-online.gr). The first stage of this action concerns basic support for SMEs to acquire basic Infrastructure and to be connected to the Internet. The second stage that has started concerns the support of SMEs with e-business advisors and the creation of help desks for e-business in 13 regions in all over Greece.
3. **National Committee of E-Commerce** – This Committee is under the supervision of the General Secretariat of Commerce of the Greek Ministry of Development (www.gge.gr/8/). The Committee aims to promote e-business at national level (including also e-business applications of the public sector) and to support the Greek government on e-business issues.
4. **EDET (GRNET)** – EDET A.E. (GRNET S.A.) (www.edet.gr) is a state company owned by the Ministry of Development - General Secretariat for Research and Technology - and the Ministry of Education operating GRNET, which is the Greek National Research & Technology Network. It provides advanced networking services to more than 60 institutions (all Greek Universities, Research Centers and Technological Institutes). GRNET's deployment and operation is co-funded by the European Union and the Greek State, since more than 80% of the traffic involves Universities and other Educational Institutions. Also EDET cooperates with e-business forum and other public organizations for the promotion also of e-business at national level.
5. **EOMMEX S.A.** – Hellenic Organization of Small Medium sized Enterprises and Handicraft S.A. is a public organization supporting the SMEs in Greece, supervised by the Ministry of Development (www.eommex.gr). EOMMEX' s mission is to promote the modernization and development of SMEs so as to enable them to meet the requirements of the constantly changing business environment. Already EOMMEX has been involved in the first stage of the action Go-online of the Greek Ministry of Development.
6. **Greek Information Society** – This initiative is under the control and supervision of the Greek Ministry of Public Administration and which is aimed at providing information and facilitating citizens' involvement by presenting Information Society policies, providing a forum for dialogue, as well as providing statistical information and information about _S initiatives and programs. It does not concern directly and only e-business support, but through its programs and actions it provides help and information to SMEs, public authorities and citizens (www.infosociety.gr).
7. **Taxisnet** – This is the official Web Site of the Greek Ministry of Economics that supports SMEs, accountants and individual citizens to make electronic transactions with the Greek tax authorities (www.taxisnet.gr) and (www.gsis.gr).
8. **Syzefxis Network** – This is a project of the Greek Ministry of Public Administration at national level that aims to facilitate communications and transactions with public organizations through Internet. The project does not concern directly e-business, but

it is expected that information provision and transactions concerning e-business with the public sector will be facilitated significantly (www.syzefxis.gov.org).

Local Authorities support

Local Authorities in the region of Athens are reported that have started support for development efforts in their area. Several Municipalities have created their own development enterprises or they are participating with other local public organizations in development agencies in their area within the region of Athens. Such development agencies aim at projects concerning the environment, public transport, employment and other development initiatives.

The following organizations concern such initiatives of local authorities in the region of Athens:

- www.aeda.gr (Municipality of Athens Development Agency).
- www.kae.gr (Center of Business and Employment of the Municipality of Athens).
- www.dimosvoulas.gr (Municipal Enterprise for the Development of Voula).
- www.dne.gr (Municipal Enterprise for the Development of Nea Erithrea).
- www.deada.gr (Municipal Enterprise for the Development of Dimos Acharnon).
- www.deal.org.gr (Municipal Enterprise for the Development of Lavrio).
- www.kifissia.gr (Portal of the Municipality of Kifissia)
- www.neasmyrni.gr (Portal of the Municipality of Nea Smyrni)

Especially for e-business support for SMEs the case of ASDA (Association for the Development of West Athens) is reported (www.asda.gr). ASDA was created by 9 municipalities of West Athens, which are: Agia Varvara, Agii Anargyri, Aegaleo, Zefyri, Kamatero, Ilion, Peristeri, Petroupoli and Haidari. ASDA has its head offices at Peristeri and during its 12 years of operation, has elaborated several studies and carried out a series of projects. Since March 1997, ASDA is providing Internet Services to the municipalities and to SMEs of Western Athens thereby enhancing their adaptability to the new national and international activities and has already established a network of SMEs of West Athens. One of the main objectives of ASDA is to support and provide help to the local enterprises so that they can actively participate and adapt to the new e-business environment.

The Internet services provided by ASDA are:

- Dial-up connections.
- Web page creation.
- Web hosting.
- Access to the network in both national and international level.
- Creation and continuous update of databases that interest SMEs.
- Creation and maintenance of prototype databases using statistically elaborated and cross-verified data, accessible under special agreement between users and provider.

Other non-profit support organizations

In the region of Athens there exist also other non-profit organizations that among their activities aim to support also e-business development in the region.

Such organizations are:

1. **ACCI** – This is the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (www.acci.gr). Among its several activities concerning commerce and industry support and promotion, recently it started to provide support for e-business through its Web site (www.acci.gr/ecommm/index.htm). This support includes provision of information on

legal issues concerning e-commerce and also answers to specific questions that a member of ACCI submits to the Web site.

2. **ESEE (NCHC)** – National Confederation of Hellenic Commerce (Ethniki Synomospondia Ellinikiou Emporiou) (www.esee.gr). ESEE is the confederation of several federations and societies of commercial enterprises at national level. Among its aims is the support of commercial enterprises with information concerning business activities, taxation, legislation, development laws, programs and initiatives. Also basic information concerning e-business is provided at the web site of ESEE and a center of e-business is planned to operate in the future. The further aim of this center is to provide support, more specialized advising and feasibility studies for the implementation of e-business.
3. **ATP** – Athens Trade Point (www.atp.gr) is a non-profit organization aiming to support its members SMEs. It is founded by the Professionals Chamber of Athens (www.eea.gr) and by three Greek federations of merchants, handicraftsmen and professionals of different economy sectors. It provides general information on trade and business activities that interest its members, aiming to provide also information and support for e-business.

III. Role of Business Advisors

E-business advisors in the region providing services for e-business operate through the organizations that were presented in the previous paragraphs. Most of them work within commercial (profit) organizations and the advisory services they provide are mainly technology oriented concerning technical solutions about e-Commerce Software, Networking, Web servers, Web hosting etc. Also through new specialized private companies, which have appeared for B2C and B2B integrated services, advisory services are provided concerning e-business processes of Web Marketing, e-payments, e-marketplaces, auctions, etc.

Besides the above advisory practice, non-profit organizations have started to organize support for e-business at several levels. Within these organizations advisors exist who help all this effort but the number of these advisors is rather limited and many times they cooperate in a part time basis. It seems that there is a need for such organizations like RDAs, Chambers, etc. to involve more business advisors, for more working time and in a more systematic way especially for e-business support to SMEs. Anyway as it has been noticed several organizations of this category (that have been reported previously - like ESEE) are planning to provide more support for e-business that includes general information on e-business, e-business strategy and feasibility studies for e-business introduction.

IV. Programs and initiatives that support e-business development

Several programs have been announced at National level and regional level that can help e-business development. Organizations like those mentioned in the previous paragraphs, SMEs and other consulting and advisory companies could participate in such development programs and initiatives. Through these programs financial, technical and advisory support is provided both at regional level and at individual SMEs activities. The implementation of e-business in most of these programs and their actions is considered as a significant step for development and competitiveness improvement of SMEs. If we consider that in whole Greece 509.837 SMEs exist, of which 192.432 (38%) are in the wider region of Athens (Attiki) and that in the year 2007 it is expected that all Greek SMEs will have a Web presence, these programs and initiatives may have significant impact on e-business

development (E-Business Forum report – EDET/VPRC, March 2002 - <http://www.ebusinessforum.gr/statistika/>).

The following are such programs and initiatives:

- Operational program “Information Society” (www.infosociety.gr).
- Operational program “Competitiveness” (www.antonistikotita.gr).
- Operational program “Employment and Vocational Training” (<http://www.labor-ministry.gr/ekt/aek/index.htm>).
- Program “Go-Online” (www.go-online.gr).
- Program “Young Entrepreneurship” (www.eommex.gr/greek/programs/program_ne.htm).
- Program “Women Entrepreneurship” (www.eommex.gr/greek/programs/program_we.htm).
- Program “Support of Competitiveness of Small and Very Small Businesses” (www.ypan.gr).
- Development law (Law 2601/1998 - Article 3 - paragraph E – IT investments) (www.eommex.gr/greek/services/activities/an_nomos/an-nomos.htm).

Besides the above programs and actions, also training activities take place in the region of Athens and in Greece in general concerning e-business. These e-business training activities are very important, since new knowledge is provided, which will be applied in the future development of e-business. In the region of Athens 6 Universities and a significant number of Vocational Training Centers and Technical Schools are involved on e-business training. Also several IT & Consulting companies, and a few RDAs organize relevant training courses.

The main characteristics of training activities on e-business issues can be summarized as following:

- Depending on the type of the training organization, the training is different on structure and content and usually covers specific subjects mainly on basic Information Technologies for e-business like Operating Systems, Web pages design and Programming Languages.
- Almost no training is provided on advanced large scale Web development models and a few courses are provided on the design of Basic Web Development models.
- The training on methodology for the design of e-business processes (BPR) is very limited, provided basically by a limited number of Universities.
- Training on the 3 main categories of e-business processes (B2C, B2B, ERP) like Web marketing, CRM, payment processes, e-marketplaces, auctions, inventories, logistics, etc. is covered in a small degree mainly by universities and no integrated training exists on all types of e-business processes. Also the integration with ERP and ERP Software applications seem not to be introduced with a few exceptions that concern mainly IT Companies that want to promote their ERP S/W.
- No significant training is reported focusing on managerial and legal aspects (like business plans, cost-benefit analysis, costing, finance, legislation, etc) especially for e-business.
- The largest target group of trainees on e-business includes students at Universities and also technical schools, who are going to appear in the market after several years, something that shows the need of trained staff in a more short-term period.

ANNEX 1.2. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS IN BOLOGNA

The aim of this section is to present how advice on e-business takes place in the region of Bologna. E-business support organisations and networks will also be reported on.

There are several agencies and bodies in the whole Bologna region supporting SMEs' entry to e-Business. Basically they are commercial (profit) organisations, mainly ISPs and Software Houses that provide the infrastructure, knowledge and support to SMEs for the introduction of e-business.

Some public organisations, such as local authorities or other public bodies, also support SMEs mainly with knowledge, information, advice and aid programs for e-business.

I. Commercial (Profit) Organisations

Around 31 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and a large number of Software Houses have been reported in the region of Bologna that provide support and advice on e-business development. Their support generally concerns technology issues, like ICT tools, Web Hosting of e-business, E-Commerce Software, Web applications, etc.

The biggest national ISPs and Software Houses offer a variety of web based services for SMEs, usually all in one package including web hosting, domain name, web site creation, secure payment and everything needed to activate an e-business.

Particularly active in the Bologna region are: I.B.M and NEXTRA, that have their local headquarters in the outskirts of the town.

II. Public Organisations

This category includes agencies and bodies that are supported by the government, by local authorities and other public or non-profit organisations, like Chambers. Work has been done at several levels for the promotion of e-business in the region.

European support

In order to increase competition within Europe, the European Union has started up a series of initiative supporting the development of the new-economy, such as:

☞ **Ten-Telecom** (Trans-European Telecommunications networks).

This is a program activated for the period from 2000 to 2006 distributing 4.600 million euros, with the aim of setting up generic services and telecommunications networks, supporting information society, increasing competition of businesses within the European Union with a growing cohesion between the states members.

☞ **IST programs** (Information Society Technology),

This program will give 547 million euros for activities supporting e-commerce up to the year 2002, increasing skills of business and consumer and stimulating co-operation between SMEs and large businesses.

☞ **Isis** (Information society initiative for standardisation),

This programme will give 4 million euros per year to the telecommunications and information society sector to increase integration in the internal market.

☞ **Consumer**, will provide the distribution between the years 1999 to 2003 of 88 million euros with the aim of promoting the interests of European consumers and guaranteeing a high level of protection through the activities of associations or public bodies.

National support

Since 2000 the Italian government has granted funding to promote actions supporting the so called new economy, especially supporting initiative related to ICT for business activities and schools.

A large amount of the Italian funding will be given to the support of e-commerce, financing the development of web portals and business associations at local level.

In particular, at national level the law 317/1991 refers to benefits for SMEs operating in the industry sector, services, commerce and artisans to increase development and competition.

The law refers to the promotion of activities in the following groups:

1. Consortium of SMEs;
2. Mixed companies;
3. Consortia with collective guarantors.

The Regions can also help fund the internationalisation of SMEs.

Chambers of commerce can give funds to SMEs for specific projects, and they can also give information, and advice on development programs.

Ministry of Industry

<http://www.minindustria.it/corpo.htm>

The PON Piano Operativo Nazionale (national operative plan) of local development is presented on this site.

At local level funding resources and advice is managed by local associations.

There are many bodies in the region supporting to some extent the entry into e-business.

Knowledge is available in the region, however the number of people with these skills is limited. Training on general IT and some aspects of e-business is available.

Links between the various agencies are currently limited.

The following links are related to the national context:

<http://www.aicel.org> Italian association of e-commerce, founded to promote e-commerce development in Italy

<http://www.arbitrionline.it> Italian institution monitoring controversy on the web.

<http://www.commercenet.it> Legal aspects of e-commerce, from the web site is possible to download a *memorandum* of e-commerce.

<http://www.commercenet.it/> Commercio Elettronico Italia is a no-profit association for the promotion and development of e-commerce in Italy. The association was set up on April 30th, 1997 by the 20 founder companies to act as a reference point for Italian companies, organisations and individuals dealing with e-commerce. It promotes the development of an open infrastructure that allows efficient interaction between clients, distributors and sellers, to reduce and optimise costs and time in the sale of goods and services

<http://www.ebusinessaward.it> Italian prize for better web business ideas.

<http://www.e-com-quality-mark.it/> Institute for the development of e-commerce.

<http://www.e-lab.it> Observatory on e-business of the Bocconi University of Economics.

<http://www.finanze.it> Web site of Italian ministry of finance, contains extensive information on e-business.

http://www.geocities.com/cosmatos_1999/ Web site explaining the new *modus operandi* of the web.

<http://www.html.it> Web site with an infinity of resources for web developer, statistics, newsgroups, on line courses and business cases on e-business.

<http://www.i-dome.com/> Web portal on e-business for SMEs.

<http://www.indis.unioncamere.it> Web guide for Italian SMEs.

<http://www.interlex.it> Scientific and informative web magazine on legal problems related to e-business.

<http://www.ispo.cec.be/ecommerce/Welcome.html> E-commerce and the European Union.

<http://www.microsoft.com/italy/enterprise/commerce/telecomunicazioni.htm> Information web site with resources for SMEs that want to start up a web based activity, useful for the analysis of objectives and causes of failure.

<http://www.minindustria.it/Osservatorio/> Observatory of the Italian ministry of industry on web business.

<http://www.techgallery.it/index.asp> Web portal with the newest technological solutions, suggestions, articles and specific research for SMEs interested in e-business.

<http://www.wmtc.net/> Web community for graduate and non-graduate students interested in the study of e-business and new economy.

The following agencies and bodies are active in Bologna providing back up for entry into e-business:

CNA www.bo.cna.it, association of craftsmen's companies and other small companies in the area.

ASSINDUSTRIA www.assindustria.it, association of industrial employers of the province of Bologna.

LEGA REGIONALE DELLE COOPERATIVE E MUTUE www.legacoop.it, [regional league of co-operatives and mutual aid] a national organisation, with local sections of recognised co-operatives.

PROFINGEST www.profingest.it is a Business School founded in Bologna in 1985 and backed by a non profit-making consortium formed by banks, the Chambers of Commerce of Emilia Romagna and the national Unioncamere (Chambers Union), by the Association of Bologna Industrialists, and by the ANCI Emilia Romagna.

I.F.O.A www.ifo.it., founded in 1972, in 1996 it became a body with a clearly defined juridical role in this context, and carries out non-profit making interventions in the public interest.

ASCOM www.acsom.bo.it, Association of the Traders and Tourist and Service operators of the province of Bologna. Represents over 15000 associates on the territory. With 13 centres throughout Bologna. ASCOM allows the adherent entrepreneurs of the Association to know the initiatives and the activities developed within the association, political trade-unions and of the technical services offered.

The Board of IFOA includes the following members who are asset underwriters: the Chambers of Commerce of Emilia Romagna and the Chamber of Commerce of Latina, Unioncamere Nazionale [national union of chambers], Unioncamere Emilia Romagna, Fondazione P. Manodori of Reggio Emilia and, as members with automatic rights of

membership, the Istituto G. Tagliacarne of Rome, the Ministry of the University, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Emilia Romagna Region and the local authorities.

CINECA www.cineca.it is a consortium set up in 1969 by the universities of Bologna, Padua, Ancona, and Florence (over the years joined by Catania, Ferrara, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma, Siena, Trento, Trieste, Udine and Venice and the CNR [National Research Council]), promoted by the Ministry of Education.

It was created as a computer centre serving public and private research, with the most advanced high performance computer systems and hardware resources for the treatment and development of information. Today it is the major computer centre in Italy and one of the most important at global level. Cineca's high potential is also due to the highly qualified technical personnel it has acquired over the years, working with the most advanced information technologies available.

ASTER www.aster.it , represents all business sectors. The main activities are: observatory on marketplace and portals in the region, surveying the dissemination of e-commerce, support to the internationalization of enterprises in Emilia Romagna and location of electronic commerce opportunities.

DEMOCENTER www.democenter.it , basically represents the mechanical field, in the Emilia Romagna region and in Italy. Activities connected to e-commerce: planning and realization of management of supplying, customers, networks of enterprises collaboration instruments and network planning.

CERMET www.cermet.it , represents mechanical activity in the Emilia Romagna region. The main activity is the quality certification of electronic commerce web pages.

Local Support

Bologna e-campus

<http://www.bolognaecampus.com>

The Bologna e-campus project of the Aldini Valeriani Foundation, responds to the skills gap, available and required skills, the job market; skill shortage, lack of qualified operators.

It also offers a wide catalogue of all the training courses available in the local area, related to the field of ICT.

Aldini Valeriani Foundation

<http://www.fav.it>

It's a place of meeting, development and promotion of the technical culture of the new millenium. The foundation center is particularly active in the field of training and advising, with a lot of meetings, seminars and courses on new technologies and their applications.

Start Cup

<http://www.startcup.com/>

Start Cup is a local prize promoted by Bologna and Padova universities, awarding the best project related to e-business.

III. Role of business advisors

E-business advisors in the region providing services for e-business operate through the organisations previously mentioned. Most of them work with commercial (profit) organizations and the advisory services they provide are mainly technology oriented,

concerning technical solutions about e-commerce software, networking, web servers, web hosting etc.

IV. Programs and initiatives that support e-business development

Services and projects already activated to back up economic development paying particular attention to hi-tech companies.

These activities are activated by Bologna Municipality to support e-business:

- Aldini Lavoro and Sirani Window
- Single window for business
- Mambo Project
- Project for the creation of a rotation fund

The Aldini-Sirani Work Window

<http://www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/mambo/aldini.htm>

Set up in 1995 to help relations between schools, companies, the world of work (to spread technical culture), it provides information, orientation, professional training, and individual advice.

From 1995 to today: 1000 young people with secondary school certificates have participated in laboratory training activities. In 2000, 990 company requests for qualified technical personnel were sent to the Window.

The Window in its role as observatory found a shortage of personnel in the area of planning and design (mechanical engineering, electronics, electro-technicians), shortage of personnel in the areas of information programming and analysis and technical/graphical, and technical/commercial areas. This is the reference framework within which the ICT projects are collocated.

Funded by the Ministry of Industry and co-financed by Bologna City Council to combat depressed areas through the setting up of small companies operating in sectors using the new technologies (high rate of growth and development).

Single window for business

http://sportellounico.comune.bologna.it/SportelloUnico/SUI_Home.nsf

The single window for business offers a variety of services for business as:

information support for business start up

list of documentation

electronic shipment of the business activation request

It also provides information and support of any kind for business activities.

Mambo Project (Multimedia Area Macello Bologna)

<http://www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/mambo/mambo.htm>

This intervenes in the city area of Cam-Pilastro-Roveri, promoting the setting up and development of small companies operating in the multimedia sector. It provides funding to the companies that set up in these areas (investment costs and operative costs account).

The companies were selected on the basis of an evaluation of the company project presented (Business Plan)

The Project on the Historic Centre and Cam-Pilastro

It intervenes in the areas: Cam-Pilastro, continuing interventions begun by the project Mambo. It intervenes in the areas: Centro Storico (Piazza Verdi/Via Zamboni and ex Ghetto; Pratello/S.Isaia, Quadrilatero of Via del Porto)

Choice of zones of the historic centre depends on an analysis of the trend of openings compared to closures from 1991 to 1999. The zones focused on indicate a phenomenon of impoverishment of exchange activities compared to the city average (productive activities database).

Project for the creation of a rotation fund

The creation of a rotation fund for new companies is being studied, with the aim of increasing the opportunities for small companies to access credit.

Companies consisting mainly of people under the age of 36 will receive incentives. The ICT sectors will provide the operative background to intervention for these companies.

ANNEX 1.3. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS IN ISLINGTON-LONDON

The aim of this section is to take a look at the current e-business support organisations and networks in the Islington region of London.

Here are a few key facts about e-business development within London:

- London leads the UK in consumer and corporate e-business use
- London was voted Europe's best city for e-business by a significant margin in Healey & Baker's first European e-locations Monitor that surveyed senior executives from 201 companies specialising in e-business from nine countries.
- The same survey predicts that London will maintain its leading position over the next five years as Europe's capital for e-logistics, e-finance, e-design and software.

EXISTING SUPPORTS FOR E-BUSINESS

Agencies and bodies in the region supporting entry to e-Business

Small businesses can obtain e-business support from a variety of agencies within the Islington area, as this area is increasingly seen as critical to maintaining London's competitive edge.

Local agencies

- a) There are a number of local agencies specialising in ICT support and offering services to small businesses. These include the Financial Services Sector Training, Well Tec, and Hoxton Bibliotech.
- b) In addition the Islington Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and the Islington Enterprise Agency (IEA), have both been active in ICT related projects over the last 5 years. These have ranged from training in using computers to running a small business, to raising awareness about the commercial possibilities afforded by the Internet, web building skills and practical help to developing a web presence. The IEA now has a lead role in the promotion of USHER within the London area.
- c) The University of North London regularly runs ICT and e-business related programmes, both to support decision making and hands-on computer learning.
- d) City and Islington College (a local educational institute in the Islington area) have recently introduced a dedicated ICT suite and programmes targeted at businesses. However, as far as businesses is concerned, the emphasis appears to remain on offering basic skills training to personnel of medium to large businesses.

Commercial

Business Services, together with Financial Services, is the largest business sector in Islington in terms of employment. This indicates an abundant supply of ICT/e-commerce services from the private sector, including software developers, web developers, ICT consultants and other businesses in the media industry.

It must be noted that much of the ICT related support available to local businesses is delivered via partnerships involving public and private sector organisations. The latter group includes IDL and Prevista.

Public Sector

Local government

Islington Council supports a broad range of ICT related initiatives targeted at new and existing businesses, as well as local residents. Recent initiatives include provision of ICT training and access to computers on-site targeted at the local fashion industry, promotion of new technology among businesses in the creative industries, and development of teleworking strategies.

Some of the above initiatives were, until recently, delivered directly by the Council, through council owned organisations such as the Arts & Technology Centre, the Financial Services Sector Training (FSST), and the Wells Technology Centre (Wells Tec). These organisations have now become independent of the Council, as part of shift within the local authority away from direct provision, concentrating instead on strategic planning, partnership development and overall co-ordination.

Central Government Support

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has developed a number of schemes to support innovation in small firms, and these are in principle available to Islington businesses. Schemes includes:

“UK online for business” (www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk) is a DTI-led industry and Government partnership towards helping businesses to exploiting doing business online. It has a team of 400 business advisers with expertise in ICT projects helping and advising businesses to effectively use business processes electronically to reach new customers and new markets.

The “SBS Smart” (www.sbs.gov.uk) scheme provides grants to individuals and SMEs to review, research, or develop technologies leading to commercial products

“Business Links” (www.businesslink.org) which is the national business support network provides ICT support through it’s Innovation Technology Counselors.

There is also London wide and UK wide network of e-Business Clubs run by the British Chambers of Commerce and UK online for business. Companies that join the clubs can receive information, guidance and practical business solutions to help them integrate technology solutions into everyday business processes. www.ebusinessclubs.co.uk

DTI – Technology Means Business (TMB) scheme which offers a nationwide network of advisers offering impartial IT and e-business advice to SME’s:
www.technologymeansbusiness.org.uk

e-Business Skillset and Knowledge available in those agencies

Islington Council

The Regeneration Unit of the Council has extensive knowledge of designing, co-ordinating and implementing SME support programmes with a focus on ICT.

The council also has in-house ICT skills within the Libraries Department and IT Support Unit. However, to date these have not been employed in any significant way in SME support.

ICC

The chamber has extensive experience of promoting and capturing clients for ICT related programmes. Together with the IEA they provide the "public relations" interface, liaising with businesses throughout the life of projects, organising dissemination events, monitoring progress and conducting evaluation activities.

IEA

As described, the IEA normally shares the front-end responsibilities with the chamber, as far as ICT projects is concerned. In addition, they also have experience of one-to-one business support assessing and helping clients to develop e-commerce proposals in the context of the entire business operation.

Hoxton Bibliotech

This organisation specialises in the technological aspects of ICT development, and therefore has a range of in-house skills in ICT including web design and development, multimedia production, and ICT training and consultancy.

Islington Development Profile

Organisation

The Regional Development Agency for Islington is not just the local authority but the partnership of SME support organisations involved in USHER, together with other local organisations collaborating in related projects.

This broad partnership is not yet a legal entity in its own right but has in effect become the main SME support mechanism in the borough. The partnership is comprised of public/not-for-profit (LBI, ICC, IEA, FSST, Hoxton Bibliotech), and private (IDL, Prevista) sector organisations, with the local authority providing overall coordination and financial support. SME support activities are organised around funded projects, and different members of the broad SME partnership would have involvement - at various levels - in these projects.

Routine business enquirers are generally dealt with by the chamber of commerce and enterprise agency. The chamber provides some information and advice to non-members. However, more substantial support is only available to members. The IEA offers intense support but free/subsidised access is limited by the different eligibility criteria of funded projects.

ANNEX 1.4. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS IN ROTTERDAM

Advisory

Syntens

The e-business advisory is presently done by several organizations. The most important one for the Rotterdam region is Syntens. Syntens works for the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The organisation is given the assignment to stimulate innovation among SMEs and therefore improve their competitiveness. What also distinguishes Syntens from the other organisations is its pro-active approach in assisting and supporting SMEs in this digital era. Through knowledge intensive workshops (free of charge), debates, free advice, etc. Syntens continuously attempts to trigger and stimulate the innovative “mind” and feed it with appropriate information and knowledge.

Syntens creates opportunities for SMEs to collaborate with knowledge and education institutions, market organisations, partners of the Dutch government and commercial consultancy companies. Syntens’s extensive network allows it to match the need and wishes of the SME with the qualified parties.

Syntens offers 5 different kinds of advice:

Fast:	Quick scan (1-2 hours; free of charge)
Short:	Quick scan plus 1day advisor
Normal:	Quick scan plus 2-day advisor and 1-day specialist
Plus:	Quick scan plus 3-day advisor and specialist. More complex issues such as supply chain integration are dealt with.
Gold:	Quick scan plus 5-day advisor and specialist. More complex issues are dealt with and a project plan is drawn up.

Rotterdam City Development Corporation (RCDC)

The RCDC was formed in 1990 as a result of a fusion between the department of Economic affairs, Real estate agency and Agency for Small and medium enterprises. The RCDC has a mandate to develop and implement spatial and economic policy for Rotterdam. Two main departments exist, that of ‘Production’ and that of ‘Development’. The production department is made of a number of smaller sub-departments (called ‘clusters’) that are responsible for the various products and services of the RCDC, both external and internal. There are two sub-departments within the Development department mainly concerned with SMEs:

- ICT Cluster
- SME Cluster

The following initiatives came from either of these clusters:

E-wijzer, a web site that provides information, practical cases and answers to frequently asked questions to SMEs on e-business/e-commerce. Specific questions are passed on to

Syntens, whom e-wijzer works closely with. On a monthly basis the site is updated with relevant news links. E-wijzer could be considered a product of the Usher project. Part of e-wijzer are the knowledge sessions for SMEs. These consist of a presentation prior to the workshop. A session is targeted at SMEs in particular sub municipality of Rotterdam.

<http://www.e-wijzer.rotterdam.nl>

Ondernemerswinkel is a physical place where SMEs could turn to for advice and questions. The people working at Ondernemerswinkel have experience with SMEs and entrepreneurs. If the question is too specific, the advisor of Ondernemerswinkel will refer the person to an organisation in their network that can give answers to the question.

<http://www.ondernemerswinkel.nl>

ICiT is set up to with municipal resources to help and support those who are eager to start their own business. Just like Ondernemerswinkel, ICIT is a physical place where they can turn to for advice and inquiries. The organisation also provides financial support in the form of subsidies when proved necessary.

<http://www.icit.nl>

Education

ETV

ETV stands for Educative Television and can be received in the Rotterdam region. ETV aims to increase knowledge and to provide opportunities for development for a wide public. Among the wide target group are the SMEs. ETV broadcast documentaries on ICT from a basic level to intermediate. ETV will develop a range of interactive (mainly through the internet and partly through Teletext) e-business/e-commerce related programs specifically for SMEs. This will be done in collaboration with OBR (from whom ETV will be receiving a subsidy) Syntens, Albeda College and IT-Brug.

<http://www.etv.nl>

Albeda College

Besides its core activities as a college, the Albeda College of Rotterdam also offers courses and trainings on a variety of ICT subjects for SMEs. What distinguishes the Albeda College from the other colleges is the that it works closely with SME supporting organisations and SMEs themselves. As a result the college has established the IT-Brug. The IT-Brug is an organisation within the Albeda College that allows SMEs with their limited resources to hire an ICT undergraduate for a specific purpose/ problem. The supervision is provided by IT-Brug, i.e. the SME does not have to assign a supervisor to the student out of its staff. For both parties, this presents a win-win situation (the undergraduate has a work placement and the SME has a good deal). The contract is on a no-cure-no-pay basis.

ANNEX 1.5. e-BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORKS IN SHANNON

As interest in e-business has emerged among SME's in recent times the support infrastructure provided within the Shannon Region by both the Private and Public sectors has grown. The following represents a guide to the sources and types of support available within the Region. The guide is indicative and does not necessarily include all the sources of support.

General Public Sector:

Shannon Development is the lead Industrial Development Agency in the Region charged with responsibility to support the establishment of new high growth and export orientated enterprise and the development of existing enterprise (manufacturing and Internationally traded services) that wish to grow. The Agency provides a range of business advice in addition to providing financial support to eligible projects. Of specific interest in the e-business area support services include,

- General e-business advice and financial support provided by a network of Business Advisors based in each County within the Region.
- An e-Cluster development programme is managed by Shannon Development and is designed to assist qualifying established business develop and implement an e-business strategy appropriate to the needs of each business.
- Venturestart is a highly focussed programme designed to deliver advice and expertise to potential Entrepreneurs who wish to start their own high potential business. The programme is delivered on a video conferencing basis to a number of locations throughout the Shannon Region.
- The Knowledge Network is the concept of bringing together business, education and innovation on one site to provide the environment for Knowledge Age enterprises to flourish. There are five locations included in the network, The National Technology Park Limerick, Kerry Technology Park, Tipperary Technology Centre, Birr Technology Centre and The Information Age Park Ennis Co. Clare. Support for new and developing enterprises is available on each site in addition to access to the resources of the Education and Training sectors.

County Enterprise Boards:

Within the Region there are a number of County Enterprise Boards who are supported by Government and the EU who have responsibility to provide advice and support to local enterprise.

- ☞ Clare County Enterprise Board Ennis Co. Clare
- ☞ Kerry County Enterprise Board Tralee Co. Kerry
- ☞ Limerick County Enterprise Board Limerick
- ☞ Limerick City Enterprise Board, Limerick
- ☞ Tipperary County Enterprise, Tipperary

All these organisations provide a range of financial, training and business advice. In addition they provide e-Commerce support through the Empower Initiative, (www.empower.ie), training, mentoring and information on e-Commerce. As these are locally based organisations they do provide support services tailored to the needs of their local business. In this regard specific e-Commerce indicatives/services are provided from time to time by individual Boards.

Enterprise Ireland

Headquartered in Dublin Enterprise Ireland is the National Agency responsible for the development of Indigenous Industry in Ireland. The Agency is a resource for Region based enterprise in particular for information and guidance on e-business related topics. Reference www.openup.ie.

Education and Training

The University of Limerick, the Limerick Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology Tralee and the Tipperary Technology Institute represent the Public sector third level educational resources available within the Region. In addition to providing full time courses in information technology to undergraduates these bodies provide part time programmes designed for Industry which in some cases can be delivered off site. These bodies also represent a concentration of expertise through their staff and all these bodies are interested in working with enterprise and this resource can usually be accessed through their respective Industrial liaison offices.

Training provided through private Companies can be secured from a large number of Companies based in most of the centres of population throughout the Region. These Companies provide programmes based in their own Centres or can provide in company training as required.

Advice and Consultancy

A little over twelve months ago there was a very limited number of private sector companies providing expertise to local enterprise. At that time companies seeking this type of service tended to have to secure this resource through a number of Companies based in Dublin. This position has undergone a significant change and there are now a significant number of commercial organisations operating in the Region e-Commerce advice and consultancy. These organisations have emerged in different manners new start-ups, evolution from related businesses, extensions from existing consultancy practices and branches of national Consultancy firms.

The following is a sample of Commercial Consultancy firms offering e-Commerce services:

Ennis Information Age Town

In 1997 Eircom, a national telecommunications company, selected Ennis as their national Information Age Town a unique project in Ireland. The project was intended to be a live experiment to see what would happen when an entire town became "wired". It was envisaged that the chosen town would give valuable feedback relating to the future product development and market strategies of Eircom.

As a result of this imitative business based in Ennis has had the advantage of being able to avail of a unique opportunity in terms of infrastructure, advice and support to enable their businesses take advantage of telecommunication technologies. To drive this project the Ennis Information Age Company was established and this organisation provides a wide service to Ennis based business including advice, mentoring and e-Commerce information.