TERENA and Knowledge Management

1. Premises:

- The countries that are member of Terena have all a different level of ICT-evolution, ICT-knowledge, expectations of the Internet, educational needs and experience of networks.
- Terena has been created as a platform for synergy to help raise, share and leverage the ICT-knowledge and experience between its members.
- Annual conferences, such as the one organized in Zagreb are a way of attaining that goal.
- I assume that during the year, many members meet and communicate with each other in order to share information and knowledge on one to one basis.
- However I suspect that there is no systematic mapping of the existing knowledge, experience and needs of every member. Nor do I know if such findings are transparent and easily available to all members.

2. Facts:

- The awareness that the richness and the real value of an organization lie in the hands, the brains and the experience of their employees is not new. However, it is only a decade ago, partly as a result of competitive pressure, that companies have openly acknowledged this and have started to try and manage their knowledge. Consequently, "Knowledge Management" and "Benchmarking" became very quickly the new things to do.
  These two concepts hide simple principles.
  Knowledge management consists first of making an ongoing inventory the existing knowledge and experience within an organization. Second, of developing the tools to ensure that this source of wealth is made available and is shared among all the members of the group. *Benchmarking* is linked to knowledge management. It is basically a structured methodology of learning from others, in or out of your own organization.

- In www.terena.nl/ tnc2003/ one reads:
  "TERENA Networking Conferences are prominent annual events, offering an opportunity to present and discuss technical and strategic aspects of the provision of networks and services to the research and education community, and the corresponding research and development activities. They bring together leading figures from the research networking community in Europe and worldwide, and provide a unique opportunity to learn about the latest developments and plans."
  This is nice and ambitious, and all the participants will go home having learned something new and having collected a bunch of business cards that they will feed into their Palm Pilot.
  They will also have enjoyed the Croatian spring in the old city Zagreb and they will look forward to next year's Terena meeting in another pleasant European capital.
- To develop and implement an open culture of real knowledge sharing is a big challenge for any organization.
  Our culture and our school system have turned us into selfish individualists. We are conditioned NOT to spontaneously share our experience and our knowledge. Indeed,

the possession of knowledge gives us the competitive edge that enables us to become the best in class, climb the social ladder, get better, richer, and more respected that our neighbour.

3. Suggestions:

- It would be very challenging but very interesting for TERENA to apply professional knowledge management techniques in order to systematize and to accelerate the knowledge transfer between its members.
- Using the management tools and the experience of the industry, would improve the efficiency and the performance of the knowledge- and experience transfer between the members of Terena.
- The benefits for each member would at least be:
  - To reflect, describe and be specific about its own objectives, goals and strategy.
  - To make an inventory of the knowledge and the experience currently available.
  - To identify specifically his needs for new knowledge and experience.
  - To know what has been done and what is currently been developed by whom.
  - To know how to access this knowledge base.
- I propose to explain and illustrate with examples some of these techniques and suggest a few practical measures that the members of Terena could use in order to become more professional in their wish and needs to transfer the existing knowledge among their members.

4. Conclusion:

- We all know that education and learning processes should be goal oriented, systematic and well structured.
- Think of the following questions:
  If the members of Terena were a bunch of school children living in different countries with distinctive cultures and an unequal level of knowledge and experience, how would you educate them to become experienced network experts?
  How would you organize their development and their training? How would you make sure that the juniors would learn from the seniors?
  Would a yearly jamboree, with random games and powwows be enough to reach your goals?
  I don't think so.
- Therefore, I am convinced that the members of Terena who wish to accelerate and be more efficient in their learning process would greatly benefit by using knowledge management techniques.

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