

PARADISO 2011 Opening Remarks

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Dear Roger and the PARADISO Team

Dear distinct audience,

I am very pleased to have been invited as a member of the PARADISO expert panel since the start of the initiative. PARADISO takes us on a journey to discuss the Internet not from the „classical“ Brussels perspectives – such as the economic, the public research investment, the innovation or the regulatory perspective. Rather it invites us into a discussion on how the Internet contributes to what matters in our lives and in our societies and how policy in the domains that I have mentioned could support this.

When it comes to a societal or even a personal perspective, the aspect of learning throughout our lives is certainly an essential one. And by this I do not only refer to employability throughout life and keeping skills up-to-date. I also refer to the ability to grow personally, to take responsibility in society, to lead and guide others, to be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial. Applying the Internet to the areas that we will address throughout the PARADISO conference will also demand a new set of skills and behavioural competences – we are already witnessing a young generation that is growing up with the Internet and using it in a very natural and intuitive way.

To give you a bit of *food for thought* on challenges for learning and the Internet – I want to provide you with three examples all from recent collaborations that I have been involved-in in my role for the European Learning Industry Group.

The first was with the director of the **BBC Academy**. The BBC is particular concerned with the sustained growth of a talent base for their organization – actually they live on talent and creativity - but interestingly they explicitly include by this a wide community of external talent including freelancers or employees of competitors. So they rather put

the person first and not the organizational belonging,. It fits to this approach that they pay attention to allow learners to better integrate learning in their day and work-life e.g. by extensive use of Internet based learning. Also they have partially made these offerings freely accesible – such as via their College of Journalism website. So you can see that greater *openess* and *community orientation* are elements where the Internet changes learning.

The second example, is from the non-for-profit world. As ELIG we maintain a close collaboration with the **United Nations University** and support their plans for creating an Internet-based Open Education Platform. The idea is to widen the scope of the United Nations University and to allow learners all over the world to enroll in UNU open courses (that would even lead to degrees) without financial entrance hurdles and in particular to allow them integrating learning into their work and family lives. The key reasons that hold back learners in developing countries from advanced education. So you can see that the Internet helps us to address learning not just as an individual but also as a societal challenge. And that it provides entirely new means for reaching out to different communities in our global society in that respect.

The final example is from the world of research. In the past week I have been together with a European Research Project on Reflective Learning in the workplaced – called **MIRROR**. Among the many interesting ideas in this project is the application of bio-medical sensors in combination with Internet connected smart phones (such as the iPhone or Android Phones) to determine and better learn to manage personal stress levels. Again, this adresses a key problem in our societies – the growing mental demand of the workplace and the limited abilities of people to personally cope with these demands. So you can see that even when it comes to the individual level of learning, we have no even come close to the end of possibilities – in particular by providing new interactive means, contexts, data and triggers for information.

To conclude on these examples, you can see that are many and diverse directions for using the Internet in the context of learning. There is not a single main route. And there are as many opportunities – many of which are still untapped (just take the personal stress management example – there are now the first start-up companies on this issue).

I personally think that learning is one of the key areas where the Internet can deliver significant societal impact – and I would be happy to have brought your mind a bit into spin on further potentials in that direction. Please keep this throughout the PARADISO conference and I am happy to debate your ideas and learning challenges at any time.