

FISTERA - Workpackage 1: News

19.07.2004: FISTERA project enters new phase

Following an independent review, the FISTERA project (Foresight on Information Society Technologies in the European Research Area), has slightly modified its focus and work programme.

- Instead of developing its own alternative visions of possible information or knowledge societies, FISTERA will use the Lisbon Objectives, summarised as the aim to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and social cohesion", as a kind of normative scenario. FISTERA will explore possible paths towards this goal, seeking to identify technologies and applications needed to achieve it, pinpointing areas where Europe and the Member States of the European Union have particular opportunities, and areas where special efforts are required to avoid being left behind global developments.
- Instead of staging a series of national roadshows, the project will now include a series of workshops on information society technologies targeted at specific groups of actors (ICT specialists, actors from application areas with particular potential for IST, politicians and other policy makers, educators etc.).
- A major element in the foreseen IST forum for consensus building on future visions for the information society is to be an online Delphi study which is scheduled to be launched in June 2004.
- Greater effort is being devoted to synergy and harmonisation of the individual work packages. Due to the very ambitious original work programme, resources for exchange were severely limited, but it has been realised that exchange is essential for the consistency of the project.
- The project no longer builds only on past foresight projects in the narrow sense. While there was originally an intention to learn mainly from exercises conforming to a fairly strict definition of foresight, the definition has been slackened to include all relevant studies of a forward-looking nature. As a result, work package 1, which is being led by ITAS, will be extremely selective in its choice of studies for comparison, but emphasis will be put on studies which help to position European IST efforts within the global landscape.

These changes have been occasioned to a large extent by the aim of feeding FISTERA results into debates on the IST sections of the European Commission's seventh framework program on research and development. Results from the first phases of FISTERA have been communicated to main actors involved in these debates and have met with great interest. There would have been no real complaints if the FISTERA project had simply carried on its original program, but the obvious interest of all parties concerned from DG INFSO to national representatives in bodies concerned with IST motivated the project team to slightly realign activities to produce results which are specifically tailored for use in science and technology policy debate.

The next events will be a series of targeted workshops, the first two addressing skills and human resources and the drivers and challenges confronting Europe on its path to the information society described in the Lisbon objectives. Further results from FISTERA will be reported in subsequent issues in the journal "Technikfolgenabschätzung - Theorie und Praxis".

(Michael Rader)

See also the articles in the journal "Technikfolgenabschätzung - Theorie und Praxis":

- No. 3/4, Vol. 11, November 2002 "New EU-Project FISTERA starts its activities with ITAS participation"
- No. 2, Vol.12, June 2003 "First Findings from FISTERA on Foresight"