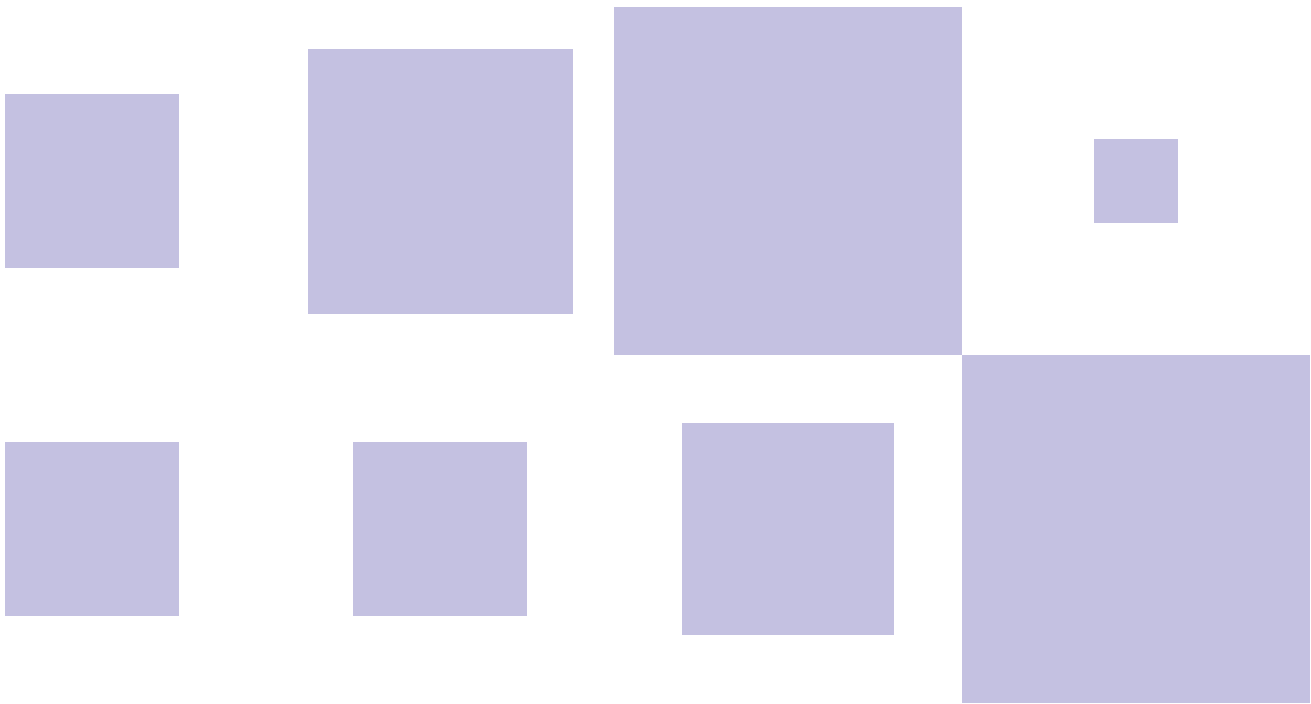
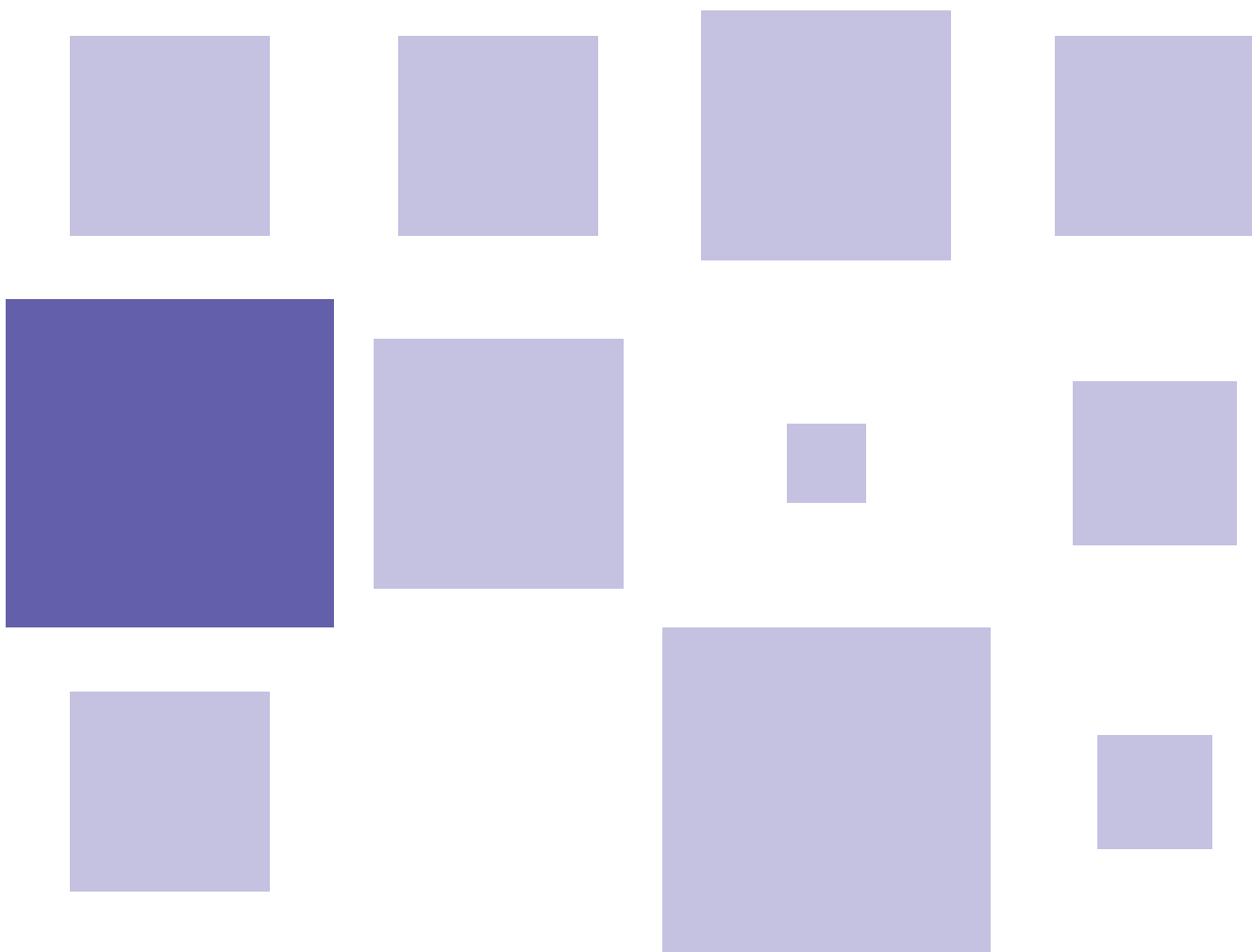


# How to Build Open Information Societies

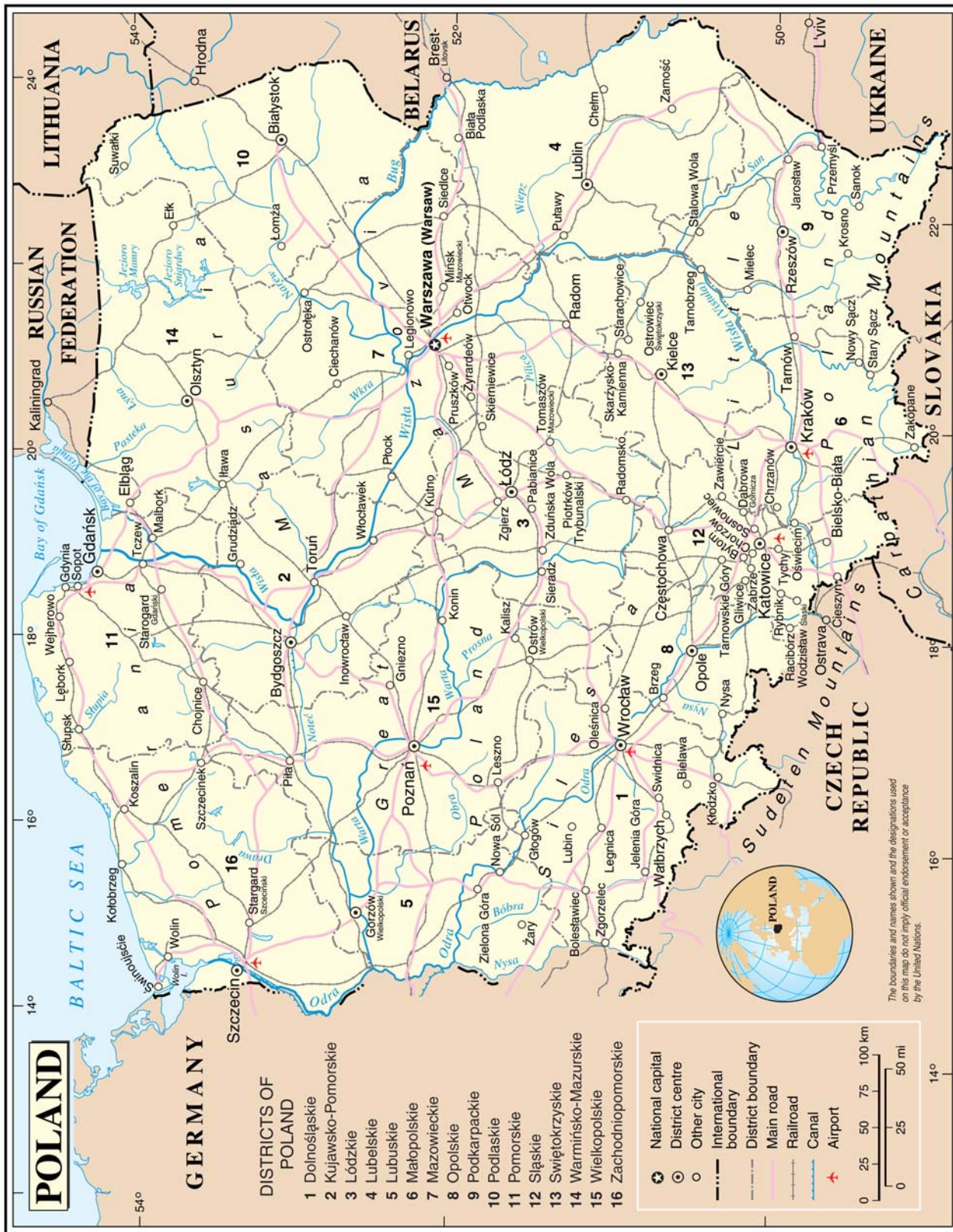
*A Collection of Best Practices and Know-How*



## ***POLAND***



# Poland



Department of Public Information  
Cartographic Section

## UNDP Poland—ICTD Country Profile

### Poland

<http://www.undp.org.pl/>

Population (millions):	38.7
Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and over):	99.7
GNI per capita (WB Atlas method, 2002, \$):	4,570.0
Telephone mainlines (per 1,000 people):	282
Mobile phones (per 1,000 people):	174
Personal Computers (per 1,000 people):	68.9
Internet users (thousands):	72.4
Human Development index rank (out of 173 countries, 2003):	35
National ICT Strategy (Y/N):	Yes
E-assessments (0,1,2...N):	6 completed

### UNDP staff in ICTD

Pawel Grzesik - Assistant Resident Representative  
[pawel.grzesik@undp.org](mailto:pawel.grzesik@undp.org)

Alexandra Duda - Assistant Resident Representative  
[alexandra.duda@undp.org](mailto:alexandra.duda@undp.org)

### ICTD Partners

- **International:** JICA, Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technologies (PJIIT), The Netherlands

### ICTD Activities

- Creating e-learning opportunities for public sector (within the Umbrella Project)

### Pipeline Programmes

- National ICT for Development Strategy Development: Develop a comprehensive national strategy to facilitate transformation of the Polish society from industrial to knowledge-based and support the development of a model approach, in a selected region, of how the strategy can address and be communicated to local communities; support awareness creation to develop multi-stakeholder consensus on e-strategy at a regional level; and strengthen national capacity for the development and use of technologies, and promote education and technical skills among users (Tentative Budget: US\$ 60,000)
- Promoting strong leadership for local response to HIV/AIDS: Use ICT to promote policy dialogue and partnership building, as well as resource mobilization for reducing HIV infection and encourage support to leading non-governmental organizations including networks of people living with HIV as well as youth groups and other active local community partners for initiating and maintaining effective policy dialogue with local government (Tentative Budget: US\$ 108,000)
- E-governance on the local level: Assist selected municipalities in developing and implementing an innovative framework for e-governance solutions in order to create development opportunities for local communities and businesses; Lay a foundation for a network of e-municipalities to share knowledge and best practices on e-solutions, building on the sustainability cities network developed by UNDP (Tentative Budget: US\$ 77,000 )
- Transfer of technological and didactic experience of the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technologies (PJIIT) in teaching computer sciences to Ukraine (Tentative Budget: US\$ 350,000)

# Better Administration through Internet-delivered Courses in Poland

Zbigniew Domaszewicz<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The Umbrella Project, a joint initiative of UNDP and the Polish Government supported by the governments of Japan and the Netherlands, has been providing e-learning training courses in the field of quality management for almost a year. The courses, directed at central administration, police, local self-government authorities, as well as small and medium-size businesses, work to improve standards of management of Polish institutions to a West European country level. All training activities are conducted over the Internet. This is an experimental undertaking, as ICT development is relatively low and Polish people are generally not familiar with e-learning. This training project is consistent with UNDP's aims and the tasks specified for Millennium Development Goals, for which information and communication technologies (ICTs) should be intensively promoted and used for disseminating knowledge, and the benefits resulting from such technologies should be made as widely available as possible.

The Umbrella Project works in cooperation with a private sector company ComputerLand, which uses the project as a tool for exploring the e-learning market. Thus far, training courses have been completed by about 300 people who have enrolled in the courses on their own initiative. Although fewer than initially expected, the experience gained from the project is positive. The project has demonstrated online e-learning to be effective and has shown that a carefully prepared course does not meet major barriers that might otherwise arise due to lack of ICT skills or from the trainees' mental resistance to learning in an online environment. E-learning is inexpensive and does not require trainees to interrupt their current work, which in many cases is a decisive factor for participating in a course. The relatively low availability of computer equipment in the Polish public sector is a more easily overcome obstacle than expected. Both the trainees and the teachers are satisfied with the course and training results.

Promoting the Umbrella Project e-learning experience for regional cross-border cooperation is planned with a programme to set-up two centres in Ukraine. These are expected to make use of the technological and didactic experience of the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technologies (PJIT), resulting in a four-year course of online studies to be completed with participants obtaining a Bachelor of Science. The Umbrella Project will manage work on the programme.

## Introduction – The Umbrella Project

Ms. Krystyna Arciszewska, an employee of the Treasurer's Office in Olsztyn (in the north-east of Poland), discovered the Umbrella Project last year while surfing the Polish Internet for pleasure during her free time. The website presented an offer of training in the basics of quality manage-

ment in public administration. The training was non-typical in that the course – from start to finish – was to be conducted electronically. All training sessions, lessons, tests, materials, etc., would only be available online.

## The Umbrella Project on the Internet

*The Umbrella Project promotes its services and disseminates the related information chiefly on the Internet. "We have almost given up the printing of our promotion materials. We refer to our website and to the information provided on our Internet service pages," says Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz. The management of the service and the analysis of the website traffic have been entrusted to an outside Internet service company. The Umbrella Project website <www.umbrella.org.pl>, has been designed so that the popular Internet search machines rank them high in the results list displayed to surfers searching for entries related to the project activities. According to the Chief of the Umbrella Project, the number of visitors to the project website has risen from several hundred, to 11 to 12 thousand a month over the past two years. Now, every fourth customer already claims to have learned about the project services online.*

### Box 1

"I have been interested for a very long time in management issues and in using communication technologies in administration," noted Ms. Arciszewska, whose work is in the area of computer systems implementation and personnel training. "I found a course like that to be an excellent opportunity for me. It was not expensive and would not disturb my everyday work. Subsequently, I decided to take part in another more advanced online quality management course offered by the Umbrella Project."

The online e-learning courses have been completed already by about 300 people, representing local self-government authorities, central administration, police, and to a smaller extent minor businesses. The purpose of such courses is to share quality management knowledge, demonstrate the benefits of implementing a quality system consistent with ISO 9000 standards, and to provide a new outlook on work methods and performance within trainees' offices or companies.

Implementation of a quality management system in administration means more efficient operation of a public office, better work organisation, improved transparency of adopted procedures, and higher reliability. As a consequence, it also facilitates obtaining and absorbing, for example, European Union aid funding. Finally, it leads to more effective and user friendly workplaces. However, introduction of such standards requires that a considerable number of people be trained.

The Umbrella Project, operating in Poland for 12 years by UNDP together with the Polish administration, and supported by the governments of Japan and the Netherlands, advises administration and small business, and now offers

three online training courses for the public sector and one for businesses. This falls within the scope of supporting local governments in pursuing sustainable development strategies (Local Agenda 21). "Both the subject matter and the training method make a very large civilising step forward," judges Ms. Krystyna Arciszewska. "Some universal principles are useful for me even in my private life."

### UNDP's Mission via the Internet

A prevalent question for development of information and communication technology (ICT) is whether the deployment of these technologies will help equalise opportunities and support sustainable development or whether they will conversely widen the gap between the rich and poor countries and regions. In other words, are digital divides exacerbated, with whole nations or large social groups (the poor, old or undereducated) remaining outside the mainstream of benefits resulting from the general use of information technologies? If digital divides are ignored or not alleviated, the already marginalised are increasingly pushed to the background of a world in which knowledge and information, trump cards in hands of developed societies, become critical factors for competitive advantage and a prerequisite for development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their corresponding targets, were adopted in September 2000 by all the UN members (see <[www.undp.org/mdg/](http://www.undp.org/mdg/)>). The MDGs define the problem very clearly. Goal 8 calls for the developed countries acting within the global partnership for development and in cooperation with the private sector, to make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.

"Our interest in the Internet-based training methods springs from the UNDP's concept, according to which Internet technologies provide an important way of disseminating knowledge and opportunities to bridge the civilisation gap," says Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz, Director of the Umbrella Project. "We decided to use this concept in Poland for fulfilling our mission, i.e., to introduce advanced management standards in public administration and business, and we succeeded in putting this idea into practice." The first online training course was started in December 2002.

### In Partnership with Private Capital

A private sector partner for the online training courses is ComputerLand, a stock company of Warsaw (the Polish capital). The company has already gained some experience in e-learning, having previously implemented an electronic training programme for its personnel, and for some of its customers (such as a Polish bank). Since 2000, ComputerLand has been operating a commercial hosting centre, Weblnn, with e-learning opportunities on offer.

For Umbrella Project training, Weblnn provides servers, a data communication and processing platform (Lotus Learning Space), and offers a 24-hour guarantee for the quality and reliability of its information links. "This infrastructure is very important, and makes it possible to ensure adequate quality for training even in the context of available national infrastructure not being very good. We have taken on the full technological service of the project and translated the training content into an electronic form. It would not be enough to install a personal computer and to put an electronic book

into it for the result to be referred to as a professional e-learning system," emphasises Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska of ComputerLand.

### What People Say...



*The Weblnn Hosting Centre belonging to ComputerLand, the technological partner of the Umbrella Project for conducting Internet training courses. The company provides communication and processing platform for distance learning, servers, and links, and offers technological guarantees.*

*"The availability of professional infrastructure is extremely important because it ensures adequate quality of training. For us, the partnership with the Umbrella Project is a typical pilot undertaking. The experience gathered to-date is very encouraging,"*

*- says Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska of ComputerLand.*

Box 2

Source: ComputerLand.

The company cooperates with the Umbrella Project on a semi-commercial basis. The company keeps half of fees paid by the trainees. The number of trainees is still quite small, therefore, the revenues are token sums, intended to cover the current operating costs of providing the training services.

Within this framework, ComputerLand has the opportunity to explore and build the e-learning market in Poland, with the partnership benefiting both parties. "The training programme implemented with the Umbrella Project for us is a typical pilot undertaking. We gather experience. The experience is encouraging. I think, we will develop our cooperation with UNDP," says Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska.

### Simultaneous Examination

The educational scope of the training is based on traditional courses previously organised by the Umbrella Project. To implement e-learning, both traditional methods and course content had to be converted for the new course environment. According to Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz, the preparatory work took about six months at a cost of about USD 50,000. The courses have been divided into modules of one-week training sessions (each course consists of four to seven modules), during which trainees familiarise themselves with the corresponding module content.

Initially, the trainees (15 to 25 people per group) take part in a zero-level session, during which they learn how to take advantage of the training, how to use the Internet communication tools and have the opportunity to get acquainted with each other and with the teacher. Each session includes exercises and tests to check the familiarity with the material learned – these are exchanged via e-mail.

Trainees are assisted by an instructor-consultant representing the Umbrella Project, who checks the exercises and tests and gives feedback. "It often happens that a dialogue develops between the instructor and a trainee, the instructor provides some additional explanations and assistance," says Ms. Katarzyna Walkowicz, who developed training courses within the project.

In addition to e-mail, communication tools used for the training include a discussion forum, a public online area, within which the trainees communicate with each other, consult each other in the case of problems, etc. A real-time chat function is also used, in which trainees participate in scheduled discussions with the consultant or a course guest (e.g. a specialist working for an office in which a quality management system has already been put into practice).

At the end of a training course, an examination is held simultaneously for all the trainees. "We intentionally designed the courses to be as similar to traditional teaching as possible," says Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska of ComputerLand. "The trainees take advantage of a professional e-learning platform, but not all possibilities offered by the Internet, such as multimedia techniques, are made use of in the training courses. This is because we could not invest too much capital in a non-commercial project, and further, we have to consider the habits of trainees and instructors, who are yet not always accustomed to the Internet."

Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz notes that, "Setting-up a training course required us to maintain discipline in creation. Most trainees connect to the Internet via a telephone line and a modem. For their convenience, the training could not be overloaded with technological fireworks."

### *Cheaper, More Comfortable, More Efficient*

The Umbrella Project promotes its training courses on the Internet and in the press directed toward the administration sector. To-date, market response has not been too impressive. "Initially we expected this to be a mass service used by not hundreds but thousands of people. The reality proved to be somewhat different, so far we have not succeeded in sufficiently popularising this activity," admits Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz, Director of the Umbrella Project. Not more than 20 percent of customers enrol for the courses on their own initiative.

On the other hand, the administration units that have already used traditional and advisory services offered by the project could be easily persuaded to use e-learning. A course of this kind might be one of the elements offered within a package of services, for example enabling those who are unfamiliar with the subject of quality management to learn the basics before undergoing conventional training in this area.

Both the trainees and consultants are satisfied with the results. "The effects of the training are clearly visible. As a result, the group I will later work with will be much better prepared for the next stages of education," judges Mr. Slawomir Wysocki, a consultant to the Umbrella Project. The evaluation questionnaires for trainees indicate that 90 percent are satisfied or very much satisfied with the course completed. Only a quarter of trainees feels somewhat dissatisfied with the lack of personal contact with the teacher. "In many cases, trainees were just enthusiastic about taking part in a training course like this. Of course, the enthusiasm declined a little bit in time, but

the marks remained positive," says Ms. Katarzyna Walkowicz.

Mr. Slawomir Wysocki says, "The e-learning makes trainees much more familiar with the course content. Previously, the same amount of information was imparted in one or two days and the teaching rate had to be adapted to the average group level. Now, the material is distributed for a longer time and people learn gradually at a rate appropriate for each of them. They can immediately verify their knowledge, they have time to analyse the problems studied with reference to work for their organisations and to actual work improvement possibilities."

The trainees express similar views on the benefits gained from e-learning. "There is no need to leave my home or to lose work days. This is a great advantage. Otherwise, I could never afford this," emphasises Ms. Krystyna Arciszewska of the Treasurer's Office in Olsztyn, who recorded the training materials on floppy discs at her office and then worked on them offline at home, outside of office hours. "The low price is also important," she adds. The difference is indeed large. According to Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz of the Umbrella Project, the market cost for traditional training is about 1,600 zlotys (approximately USD 400) per person. For the project's e-learning courses, the cost is about USD 200-400 zlotys (USD 50-100) per person.

About a dozen personnel from the National Police Headquarters took part in training courses run by the Umbrella Project. Police Superintendent Tomasz Szankin reports, "The quality management model should be introduced within the police administration gradually, step-by-step. Initially, it will be necessary to train a number of people to help them first become familiar with all the aspects of the subject matter, and subsequently to be able to build appropriate organisational culture within the police. For such a purpose, we found the e-learning course to be very helpful. Police officers participated in the course and took great advantage of it. We had no trouble in terms of access to computer equipment," adds Mr. Szankin.

### *What People Say...*

*Police Superintendent Tomasz Szankin of the National Police Headquarters in Warsaw (a participant in a quality management course and a promoter of Internet training in the police).*



*"Why the Internet? The cost of this form of training is not too high and people do not have to interrupt their normal work. This is important because the budget assigned for the professional improvement of the police is, unfortunately, quite small."*

Box 3

In spite of relatively low availability of computers at Polish public offices and low Internet accessibility in Poland,

technological shortages were not found to be a big obstacle for office personnel participating in the e-learning courses. In any case, adequate equipment can be somehow available within a specific unit. "Connections and technology are not a particularly great barrier in Poland," observes Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska of ComputerLand. "A more serious obstacle may be caused by psychological resistance. When organising a training course, one must know how to prepare it so that various technology phobias or unwillingness are overcome in prospective trainees. People should be skillfully prepared for the task instead of being thrown at once into deep water and subjected to excessive stress. With time, some people get into the swing of e-learning, like into a computer game."

### Online Studies in Computer Science: From Poland to Ukraine

It is very likely that the Umbrella Project will soon have the opportunity to extend the e-learning experience outside of Poland. Since January 2003, work has been carried out on a project to launch an Internet-based school of higher education in Ukraine. The project, implemented with the participation of UNDP offices in Poland and Ukraine and which is to be granted financial and consulting support from the government of Japan through UNDP, will include setting-up two specialised centres in Ukraine, prepared to run online courses. A centre of key importance for the project is the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technologies (PJIIT), a university established in Poland with the assistance and financing provided by the government of Japan. In addition to traditional courses, the Institute will conduct online studies lasting four years and culminating in a Bachelor of Science degree (B.Sc.) in computer science – after passing the required formal examinations administered in the conventional manner.

According to the current concept, the experience gained by PJIIT in Poland is to be used also in Ukraine. The Institute will contribute its technological platform used already in Poland for distance learning and the complete didactic package. Programme organisation and management, in particular the preparation, starting up, and running, will be the responsibilities of the Umbrella Project.

In consideration of Ukraine being ranked at a low 75th by the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2003, the planned project may be found to be a particularly good fit with UNDP Millennium Development Goals and targets. As an emerging donor, Poland (with a HDI rank of 35), a country that previously was a beneficiary of aid programmes, now enters the new role of a country that supports less developed countries in the region. Although unable to provide more significant financial aid because of limited budgetary capacity, Poland can share experience and know-how with the countries where the transfer of knowledge would help in sustainable development. This is also a way to strengthen the cross-border cooperation with the neighbouring countries.

According to Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz, the initial work on the Ukrainian project to launch a system of online studies is now at the final stage. The Umbrella Project estimates the total programme cost at about USD 350,000. During the two-year preparatory period, appropriate centres in Ukraine will have to be provided with the necessary equipment, teaching staff will have to be employed, pilot

courses will have to be run, and students will have to be recruited for the first year of studies. The first semester of the four-year course of studies is expected to begin in 2006.

### A Chance for Hundreds of Thousands

All who are trained by e-learning not only become familiar with advanced standards of good management but also have an opportunity to become aware of the role of modern information and communication technologies (ICT), to get accustomed to them, and to learn how to use them. And this, like improving the standards in public administration, is one of the ways for UNDP to help countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Good experience spreads. Ms. Krystyna Arciszewska of the Treasurer's Office in Olsztyn shares experience gathered from the Umbrella Project courses with her co-workers by contributing to internal publications of her office. "We would be glad to continue the training of this type for the policemen," says Mr. Tomasz Szankin of the National Police Headquarters. "We are also considering introducing internal e-learning system for our own needs."

Mr. Tadeusz Buchacz, Director of the Umbrella Project, states that the year of working with the new medium has proven to be a very positive experience. "It can be seen that e-learning via the Internet is a suitable means for training courses covering a very wide range of subject matters." A similar opinion is expressed by Ms. Malgorzata Kalinowska-Iszkowska of ComputerLand, "So far, about 300 people have already successfully completed the training. Although this is a small number, it is obvious that hundreds of thousands of people should take advantage of this type of course. This is a great opportunity for social groups or even nations to easily acquire education and, consequently, to keep pace with economic and social development. I am sure this will become recognised."

#### Internet penetration in Poland

<b>people with access to the Internet</b> (Internet-users * - 21 %)	27 %
<b>people without access to the Internet</b> (non-users who believe they will go online in 6 month - 5 %)	73 %

Table 1

Source: TNS OBOP

\* Internet-user - someone who uses the Internet at least once a month

#### Internet penetration in Poland depending on location

	<b>the rate of Internet access</b>
rural areas	16 %
city under 20,000 inhabitants	32 %
city / 20,000 - 100,000 inhabitants	29 %
city / 100,000 - 500,000 inhabitants	35 %
city above 500,000 inhabitants	42 %

Table 2

Source: TNS OBOP

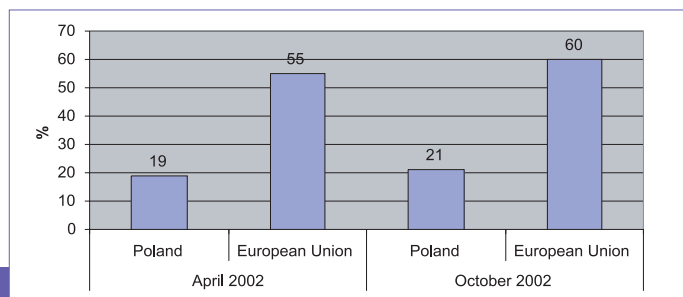


Figure 1 **Online availability of basic public services**  
Source: Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (2003)



Figure 2 **Online availability of business-oriented services**  
Source: Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (2003)



Figure 3 **Online availability of citizen-oriented services**  
Source: Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (2003)

### Lessons Learned

- The e-learning courses should be designed so that even a low-bandwidth connection, such as via a telephone line and a modem, will not be a barrier for the trainees. This is particularly important for countries in which ICT infrastructure is relatively under developed (such as Poland and most Central-East European countries) and in which broadband access to the World Wide Web is still very rare. The Umbrella Project training courses show that preparing courses that meet this requirement is fully possible.
- Popularisation of online training courses to such a degree that large numbers of people will enrol for the courses by themselves may be difficult for various reasons. However, e-learning proves to be an excellent tool for supplementing traditional advisory and training services. It enables trainees to prepare themselves at their own pace and methodically for the various training stages (conducted as traditional lectures) and to improve the knowledge acquired.

- Online e-learning does not engender any major mental barriers even for those who, because of their age or lack of experience, might feel fear when confronted with ICT. Following a relatively short and simple introduction, people easily learn how to use e-learning and are expressly satisfied with the form and course of the learning. It is quite likely that some trainees will find e-learning via the Internet to be the first serious and encouraging experience for Internet use. Experience like this can provide a window on the opportunities offered by ICTs and contribute to the popularisation of ICTs throughout society.
- Public sector trainees who completed courses point out that the programme offered them an opportunity to acquire knowledge via the Internet at a relatively low cost. The cost for the e-learning course is a fraction of the cost of equivalent traditional training and, additionally, public sector units do not have to bear the cost of travel and accommodation of their personnel delegated to the training. The financial factor provides a very important stimulus for developing countries in which public sector financing is far below the required level.
- Organisation of online e-learning is an area in which partnership with a non-governmental organisation with a specialised commercial data communication company providing the necessary infrastructure base and continuous technological assistance gives very good results. The Umbrella Project example in Poland shows that a partnership of this kind may be successfully established on semi-commercial basis without the involvement of major capital outlay. This is particularly enhanced by the fact that for a corporate partner (operating in a growing market, where e-learning is not yet popularised) a project like this may be a valuable pilot experience in this field, demonstrating the prospective commercial potential of e-learning undertakings.

## Public Services on the Internet in Poland and in Europe

The average level of public e-services development in Poland is 21 percent, which is one third of that observed in the European Union. This means that an average public institution does not provide even the minimum information required by individuals or entrepreneurs via the Internet.

These figures were determined by a Cap Gemini Ernst & Young (CGEY) survey carried out at the end of 2002. For the purposes of the survey, all public services were divided into 20 separate groups by the types of services provided, such as services intended for individuals (e.g. related to employment, taxation, identification cards, residence registration, vehicle registration, etc.) and for corporate units (e.g. related to public procurement, taxation, customs issues, registration of businesses, etc.). The study investigated the level of information and services available via the Internet. Based on these findings, analysts estimated the percentage of advancement and development of a specific e-service provided by the unit under investigation (100 percent representing a model system for which the full scope of services can be obtained electronically).

Box 4

<sup>1</sup> **Zbigniew Domaszewicz** is a graduate of the University of Warsaw, having specialised in International Relations; the author of scientific publications (1998) on the social and political situation of the present-day Ukraine; and since 1998 is a journalist at the economic department of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's largest national newspaper.