GLOBALink
Telecommunications for European Smoking Prevention

Final Report to the European Commission
15 September 2001 – 15 September 2002

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URL: http://www.GLOBALink.org/

Objectives of the project:
Health education and/or promotion
Co-ordination of activity
Creation and operation of networks
Communications

Total expenses of the project:
373 107,21 EUR

Funding sources:
• Project co-ordinator and partners: UICC and GLOBALink Membership
• European Commission 175 075,05 EUR (47%)
• Other resources
• In kind WHO and GLOBALink Membership

Executive summary:
Over the 12-months-period GLOBALink has been able to achieve its objectives: a better communication system among tobacco control professionals. The various networks provided to its membership have been instrumental in co-ordinating tobacco-control activities as well expanding interactions between members. GLOBALink’s European membership has grown by 22.6%. GLOBALink information technology infrastructure has completely been re-engineered.
Project Partners & Co-ordination

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Background

GLOBALink, the International Tobacco-Control Network is a community of practice dedicated to help all those active in smoking prevention.

GLOBALink is now a popular information and communication service:

- Linking intergovernmental, national and non-governmental organisations as well as individuals via a secure information system and electronic-conferences, increasing efficiency through improved communication, multimedia and co-ordination,

- Supporting the communication infrastructure of most of the European smoking prevention organisations.

- Providing instant access to an interactive computer information service with an expanding multimedia data base of reference and resource materials, regular news bulletins and 'action alerts',

GLOBALink was established in 1989 by the American Cancer Society as an information system linking tobacco control advocates world-wide; to counter, as far as possible, the global reach of the tobacco industry. In 1993, responsibility for GLOBALink was transferred to the UICC in Geneva, to improve European-wide and world-wide coverage of the network, strengthen day-to-day links between most actors of smoking prevention.

Smoking prevention is a major concern in Europe. Organisations in the field recognise the need to co-ordinate their tobacco-control activities. GLOBALink provides the most efficient tool for the realisation of these objectives integral to the multinational and multi-agency campaigns to improve the health status of all Europeans.

GLOBALink is used by most European Agencies active in smoking prevention. GLOBALink provides calendars, directories and regular news-bulletins on tobacco and on Cancer, including prevention. The network provides electronic-mail, electronic-conferences, web-site hosting and databases.
Means by which the project was implemented:

GLOBALink provided a confidential, interactive internet-based computer network between smoking prevention, public health related groups, individuals and organisations.

Prime services included access to expanding databases and information/strategy exchanges - between individual users, for selected groups of users, or amongst all users.
GLOBALink provided a wide range of News-Bulletins as well as a growing number of Electronic-Conferences. Chat-rooms were provided but were not the mostly used tool.
GLOBALink, its partners and members provided an expanding variety of online news and documents, often only available on the premises of GLOBALink. To ease information retrieval, GLOBALink interacted with TobaccoPedia, The online Tobacco Encyclopedia.

Member Technical Support

Basic technical assistance was provided by email or on GLOBALink website. Most frequently asked questions included:
- lost-password requests,
- how to post a message to a list,
- how to interrupt email delivery while away from the office…

To those who needed additional or specific technical assistance, GLOBALink provided instant email support as well as a telephone hotline support during opening hours.
Results:
The GLOBALink public and membership websites have been entirely re-engineered in order to cope with the growing demand by the public and by its membership for synthetic tools: with the wealth of information available, it was essential to provide tools/short-cut to access the relevant information to each target group. Website navigation and user-interface have been analysed and, based on requests, experiences as well as on new Internet trends the “New GLOBALink” infrastructure was launched in March 2002.

GLOBALink has been providing tobacco control information via its improved public website (http://www.globalink.org) which has become a key “tobacco control entry-point” on the Internet. One of the reasons for this success was our ability to interconnect successfully GLOBALink information with TobaccoPedia, The Online Tobacco Encyclopedia. Indeed, most information published on GLOBALink is categorised on TobaccoPedia, which, again makes it easy to retrieve.
Membership.

From approximately 2500 members (1230 from Europe) at the beginning of the project in September 2001, the membership has now reached more than 2900. GLOBALink membership includes all countries of the Union and most countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Thanks to this broader presence, GLOBALink is now seen as the natural partner for tobacco control projects and agencies working in Central and Eastern Europe: GLOBALink has contributed to the European Conference on Tobacco or Health as well as in two tobacco-control workshops in the region. These workshops were organised by the American Cancer Society, the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation) and several projects have emerged from these workshops.

Several targeted promotional correspondences have been initiated: an important aspect of the work is to collect addresses of potential members and include them in the GLOBALink database of tobacco-control. Promotional leaflets were systematically sent to organisers of tobacco-control events and are generally displayed or inserted in the "delegates' kit".

In some countries GLOBALink members are relaying locally the promotion of the network: presentations at national tobacco-control events (e.g.: Italy, Hungary, Spain Sweden, United-Kingdom). On these occasions, GLOBALink, with the input of local members, evaluated the need for eventual the addition of dedicated list-servers.

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GLOBALink membership may be reaching a plateau in coming years depending on the growth of the tobacco-control population. The main objective is to remain a network of experts in the field rather than becoming a loose network comparable to any newsgroup available on the internet (e.g.: alt.lifestyle.smoking ... ). Due to the nature of the network and its regulation, it is not possible to include in this report a list of the network membership but this database may be consulted online by European Commission tobacco control experts at any office of the project partners.
Information

GLOBALink provide timely information and support to its membership: the 250+ list-servers have been integrated into a database which now allows greater flexibility: instead of “getting-all/none” messages for a particular list, a new tool has been designed to enable members to select delivery mechanisms for each list among the four following options:

- **Receive the messages of this list as soon as they are posted**
- **Receive once a day the messages posted to this list**
- **Receive once a day the titles of the messages posted to this list**
- **Do not receive by email the messages of this list**

GLOBALink acted as a small yet fast clearinghouse. While it is able to guide members to potential sources of information and to relay requests to the most adequate recipients, due to the lack of human resources, some questions –requiring intensive labour- cannot always be addressed.
Internet Services
GLOBALink offered Internet and hosting services for European Health related events. The best illustration of this is the 3rd European Conference on Tobacco or Health (Warsaw, June 2002) which used GLOBALink as its main communication vehicle.

Due to the entire re-engineering of GLOBALink and a longer-than expected test-phase, the meeting of GLOBALink European Partners was postponed to a later date. This did not prevent GLOBALink to listen to its members who made significant contributions.

For the same reasons and due to the too short existence of the new infrastructure it was decided to postpone the evaluation of the Network services based on its added-value. An evaluation will take place early in 2003.

Databases
Existing databases were maintained, that is kept up to date. In order to provide backward compatibility, news search capabilities have been added to GLOBALink and an easy gateway has been implemented in order to reach the archive of the network.

GLOBALink supported European smoking prevention organisations: GLOBALink provided discussion groups mailing lists in order to share information and opinion. Members were able to create their own online community of practice. (suggested reading: http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml)

The GLOBALink tobacco control directories evolved in order to allow various search capabilities: alphabetical, regional and combined searches have been made possible.

Electronic Conference databases: GLOBALink's technology is a combination of electronic-mail, world-wide-web and databases. The objective of this combination is to allow multiple ways for information exchange (posting and/or gathering). Thanks to our databases, electronic-conferences are available by electronic-mail (send and/or receive), via GLOBALink website (search, send, receive, threads and date indexes). In addition to the usual GLOBALink electronic conferencing tools, a new feature has been implemented in order to provide information in the most efficient manner. This feature is named “GLOBALink Today”. It is a daily summary of all information exchanged on the network (News items, news bulletins and electronic conferences). GLOBALink Today provides a list of web links with the subject of the communication as well as its author. (see annex)
Online Tobacco Control Calendar: A list of upcoming conferences is available online on [http://calendar.globalink.org/](http://calendar.globalink.org/) – it provides direct links to the events' home pages. It currently includes most tobacco-control events until the next World Conference on Tobacco or Health (Helsinki, August 2003).
Membership Database: A consequence of GLOBALink growth was that it was no longer possible to know "everyone" on the network… Conscious of this and in order to better serve tobacco-control professionals, GLOBALink developed a simple directory of its membership. In addition to the address of the members, this gives information on the activities and motivations of each member. The listing of all GLOBALink membership prints on more than 50 pages – Each member has been given a personal web page to describe their activities and areas of interest.

Creation and operation of networks

Several European discussion groups have been activated and/or operated. A direct network subscription mechanism for these lists are directly available at the time of application to GLOBALink: the benefit is that discussion groups are formed at higher speed (http://join.globalink.org/net:Euro). Special European News are provided in order to optimise the time of European Network Members as well as to provide information on Europe to the rest of the world.

GLOBALink also served as a clearinghouse for information, the staff assisted members to find information or to find their way to the information… GLOBALink provided technical support over the telephone and by e-mail. The principle used was to immediately support a member who was encountering difficulties.

In order to better serve its European membership GLOBALink has run French, Italian, Czech, Swedish, Hungarian and Spanish discussion groups – All discussion groups have been integrated in a database for data search.

Conclusions:

GLOBALink is a key strategic tool for European and global tobacco control. It is described by several members as “the glue holding the entire tobacco control movement” and as such, it is a very useful means to help those active in the prevention of smoking. Thanks to recent technical developments, GLOBALink has been able to show its rapid adaptation to the ever fast evolving needs of tobacco control professional organisations and agencies.