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GLOBALink
Telecommunications for European Smoking Prevention

Final Report to the European Commission
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INWAT Europe
Organisation of GLOBALink

GLOBALink, the International Tobacco-Control Network is a virtual community dedicated to help all those active in smoking prevention. As of 15 September 2001, GLOBALink has more than 2500 members of which X______X are Europeans.

GLOBALink has become 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 coordination,

- Supporting the communication infrastructure of most 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 now 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.

GLOBALink activities include: administration (e.g.: membership screening), operations (e.g.: addition of new documents) and developments (e.g.: programming of new tools, migration to a new server). These are accomplished by GLOBALink personnel. Decisions and orientations are done after consultation of the Project Partners and with the supervision of the GLOBALink Management Committee, a Committee composed of volunteers. GLOBALink Members are invited to send their suggestions to GLOBALink. The Project Manager reports directly to the Executive Director of the UICC, signatory of the contract as well as to the GLOBALink Management Committee.
Progress report: by task

• Extend the User-Base towards more European and Eastern European membership.

From approximately 1900 members (1000 from Europe) at the beginning of the project in September 2000, the membership has now reached 2500 (XXX from Europe). Important fact: GLOBALink membership now includes all countries of the Union and most countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Several promotional correspondences have been initiated. In some countries GLOBALink members are relaying locally the promotion of the network: presentations at national tobacco-control events (e.g.: in Spain where Dr J. Toledo presented the advantages of the network).

## Evolution of GLOBALink Membership

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NB: GLOBALink membership may be reaching a plateau in coming years depending on the growth of the tobacco-control population.

• Maintain existing databases up to date

GLOBALink staff has regularly updated the online databases of tobacco-control documents. Simultaneously, database programming has been implemented in order to provide a more user-friendly way to search on GLOBALink. Many documents have been indexed by TobaccoPedia which is the new portal for tobacco-control related information. The International Directory of Tobacco Control (IDTC) has become an important resource: it is the largest directory of tobacco-control. It lists all the world's tobacco-control experts and many tobacco control advocates. The Directory is widely used by European members to find contacts, verify addresses, organize meetings. The IDTC has been used in preparation of European Tobacco Control Conferences as well as the 2000 World Conference on Tobacco OR Health and is being used for the coming World (Helsinki) and European Tobacco Control Conference (Warsaw).

**News databases:** GLOBALink regroups and broadcasts news-bulletins from Europe and all over the world. This way GLOBALink ensures that no major event on tobacco remains unknown to its membership: since the beginning of GLOBALink's operations (in 1992) Europeans have always had a close look on the evolution of tobacco control in the world.

All Information relayed by GLOBALink was integrated into full text databases to allow further retrieval.
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 gathering). Thanks to our databases, electronic-conferences are available by electronic-mail (send and receive), via GLOBALink website (search, send, receive, threads and date indexes).

Calendar: A list of upcoming conferences is available online – it provides direct links to the events’ home page. 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.

- Support European smoking prevention organisations

European discussion groups have been activated and have been promoted. A direct 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. 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 future data search.

- Provide information and support to GLOBALink Membership

GLOBALink act as a small and fast clearinghouse. While it is are 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 hosting services for European Health related events**

As of September 15, 2001, GLOBALink hosts 96 websites related to tobacco. In some instances, GLOBALink staff have helped in designing the website. Hosting services and internet help is free of charge. GLOBALink has been approached to provide support for future tobacco control conferences: e.g.: European Conference on TOH, Jun 2002, Annual conference of the European Respiratory Society. World Conference on Tobacco or Health 2003.

• **Meeting of GLOBALink European Partners**

This meeting scheduled for the 1st quarter 2001 had to be postponed due to the late signature of the agreement and the impossibility to advance the funds. The meeting had then to be cancelled due to the late notice and other commitments taken by the project partners. Instead, a very positive feedback from the partners compensated and showed they were satisfied with the way the project was evolving.

• **Evaluation of the Network services based on added-value**

Initially the evaluation was to take place right after the partners’ meeting but the meeting was cancelled. A new process is under way in order to better organize the evaluation of the Network services.
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