WSIS gave a boost to library development in Slovakia

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Abstract

WSIS presently belongs among significant external sources of ideas and suggestions for the development of national library networks, and thus also for the Slovak Library Network. The main methodological significance of this source is that it contains comprehensive and global view of the Information Society development in the world in its major components and in various fields. The practical meaning of WSIS is that it encourages country to formulate its own national policy and strategy for implementing ICT on governmental level. Description of the Library network of the Slovak republic; governmental activities and WSIS; Slovak library network and WSIS; developmental projects oriented to ICT implementation and knowledge society development.

Introduction

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- Slovakia - Central Europe with 5.5 million inhabitants
- Member state of the European Union
- Library Acts was adopted in 1919, 1959, 2000
- Legal framework and principles for Library Network of the Slovak Republic.
- National Library, 12 scientific libraries, 33 academic libraries, 2600 regional, municipal and local community public libraries, 300 special libraries, and 6000 school libraries
- The Library Network of the Slovak Republic is open
- Continuity and external stimuli
- WSIS presently belongs among significant external sources of ideas and suggestions for the development of national library networks
- The practical meaning of WSIS is that it encourages country to formulate its own national policy and strategy for implementing ICT on governmental level
- Activities oriented to an larger extent to the area of libraries

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Slovakia is a small country in Central Europe with 5.5 million inhabitants. It is a member state of the European Union. Librarianship in Slovakia has developed since the beginning of the 20th century on legislative basis. After the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 the first Library Act was adopted in 1919, followed by the next one in 1959.

In 2000 a new Library Act was adopted owing to common effort of Slovak librarian community. This act provides legal framework and principles for the functioning of the Library Network of the Slovak Republic.

The Library Network in Slovakia comprises the National Library, 12 scientific libraries, 33 academic libraries, 2600 regional, municipal and local community public libraries, 300 special libraries, and 6000 school libraries.

The Library Network of the Slovak Republic is open. On one hand it is based on national professional continuity and on the other hand, it makes use of external stimuli that have influenced and still influence the development of the Library Network on the national level. These are in particular the initiatives, programs and projects of the European Union, the Council of Europe and projects run by various international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

It is obvious that in no country the development of library network started only thanks to WSIS. However, WSIS presently belongs among significant external sources of ideas and suggestions for the development of national library networks, and thus also for the Slovak Library Network. The main methodological significance of this source is that it contains comprehensive and global view of the Information Society development in the world in its major components and in various fields. The practical meaning of WSIS is that it encourages country to formulate its own national policy and strategy for implementing ICT on governmental level.

Due to participation of Slovak Republic Government's in WSIS activities the government's attention started to be oriented to an larger extent to the area of libraries. Libraries started to

appear in governmental programs and in projects for ICT implementation along with other traditional sectors (schools and education, transport, telecommunications etc).

A process of building the Information Society was commenced, in which culture has its irreplaceable position together with its institutions and systems. Care for protection and use of information, knowledge, documents and monuments as an integral part of the European culture and, at the same time, the basis for specific Slovak cultural identity, has become increasingly the object of interest.

The Government and WSIS

In 2002 the Slovak Republic's Government dealt for the first time with participation of Slovakia in WSIS. At that time, the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications was designated as the coordinator for preparing WSIS activities on the part of Slovakia. Concurrently the fundamental WSIS documents were published and their full translation is posted on websites of ministries of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, of Culture etc.
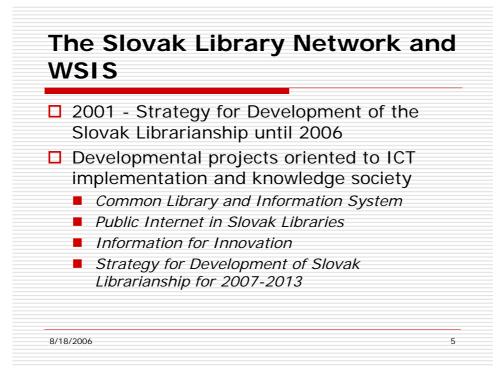

Reports on WSIS were brought forward also by specialized library journals. On national level the WSIS ideas have been promoted not only through the Ministry of Transport, but also by the governmental plenipotentiary for the Information Society. The WSIS stimuli were accepted and made more tangible in combination with the stimuli originated at the European Commission and elaborated into fundamental strategic materials and programs of Slovakia in the area of implementation of ICT. Among these there is for instance a comprehensive program called iMinerva, which is an official governmental program for development of knowledge-based economy in Slovakia. It is based on the Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010 - the national Lisbon Strategy that was prepared by the Vice-Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic Ivan Mikloš and in February 2005 it was univocally approved by the Slovak Government.

The aim of the Minerva Program is development of activities to support of the so-called knowledge-based economy in Slovakia. These activities focus on 4 basic areas:

- Information society,
- Innovation, science and research
- Investing in people and education
- Business environment

A major shift forward for the Minerva Program is represented by the Action Plans for the Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010 approved by the Slovak Government in July 2005. One of the action plans is implementing ICT in libraries.

The Slovak Library Network and WSIS

The Slovak Library Network and WSIS

- ☐ 2001 - Strategy for Development of the Slovak Librarianship until 2006
- ☐ Developmental projects oriented to ICT implementation and knowledge society
  - ■ *Common Library and Information System*
  - ■ *Public Internet in Slovak Libraries*
  - ■ *Information for Innovation*
  - ■ *Strategy for Development of Slovak Librarianship for 2007-2013*

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After the adoption of the Library Act in 2000 the Government of the Slovak Republic approved several materials that have had a significant impact on the development of Slovak librarianship.

In 2001 the Government adopted the Strategy for Development of the Slovak Librarianship until 2006.

The Strategy contains tasks for Ministries and recommendations local government and authorities. These tasks concern construction and modernization of buildings, the project of implementing ICT in libraries, connection of libraries to the Internet, establishment of the research program for saving, stabilization and conservation of traditional carriers of information in the Slovak Republic and the obligation to declare library services as a part of the public information services. There were some further provisions regarding acquisition of information resources etc.

Fulfillment of these tasks was carefully evaluated by a final conference. Some projects that were launched in accordance with the Strategy refer directly to the WSIS working materials being prepared and later to the WSIS Declaration and Action Plan.

In conjunction with the WSIS Action Plan a series of other developmental projects oriented to ICT implementation and knowledge society development was established in Slovak Librarianship.

Common Library and Information System

One of the projects that were formed with regard to the WSIS ideas is the Project of the 3rd Generation Library and Information system (KIS3G). At present this project is in progress. It is based on the idea of making use of common software shared at national level. This common software is being used by more than 30 libraries and we have attained better availability of technology for libraries and improvement library services for citizens. The output of this project is the Slovak Library portal available at http://www.ecatalogues.sk/..The total project costs are approximately 1 million €

Public Internet in Slovak Libraries

This project is in accord with the Strategy for Building Information Society approved by the Government's Resolution no. 43/2004. It meets especially the following objectives: coordinated, well-informed and thus also effective spending of public finances in the process of building the information society, knowledge potential and competitiveness of the population. It also follows the strategic goals in the area of ICT infrastructure, especially the goal of creating information and communication infrastructure corresponding to the level of European Union states available for all citizens and business entities. For reaching this goal it is among others necessary to establish public accessible internet access points in public and scientific libraries that will enable free and cheap access to information for all demographic groups of citizens. The project also carries out the action plans for the Strategy of Building Information Society, where implementation of ICT in libraries is generally included as the central task of the cultural sector.

The practical measures to be taken under this project is to equip 110 public professionally staffed libraries with computing technology and create 760 new public Internet access points. The project's costs are app. 1 million €

Information for Innovation

The project was initiated by the Slovak National Library and it involves 11 scientific and academic libraries. The objective is to enhance the active role played by scientific and academic libraries in knowledge society, to accomplish and make operational an open national information infrastructure, which uses university and research libraries as its main pillars and to orient their information activity to support of industries and services as well as to support small and medium-sized enterprises. The project was approved for funding from EU structural funds also due to support by the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic. The approved funding is in amount of approximately 6 million €

Strategy for Development of Slovak Librarianship for 2007-2013

At present there is a public discussion in progress concerning the strategy for libraries for the period 2007-2013. One of the main starting points of the Strategy is the WSIS Action Plan. The first draft of the Strategy originated at the Slovak Library Association Conference in June 2006. At the current stage the Strategy is focused on the following goals:

1. Libraries for the knowledge-based society
2. Implementation of ICT in libraries
3. Library and information services for disabled users

4. Program for saving, stabilization and conservation of traditional information carriers in the Slovak Republic.
5. Education of library staff and human resources development
6. Construction and reconstruction of library buildings
7. Information instruction and education of children and youth.