

Information Management and Collaboration Support within SARNET

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Abstract

The success of the Sarnet project depends to a high degree on the collaboration of the 52 partner organizations, with over 200 participants. As the organizations are spread throughout Europe, an efficient way had to be provided to enable information to be shared between all participants, and to support communication between them. For these tasks, a so-called "Advanced Communication Tool (ACT)" had to be developed.

The design of the technological basis for information management and collaboration started from a survey of existing solutions. Today, portal solutions are available for this purpose. In general, they combine document management facilities with collaboration features. The survey indicated that at this moment in time, a solution based on a commercial software was best suited for the purposes of Sarnet. The features of this solution, particularly with respect to document management and collaboration, will be described in more detail.

In a next step, the ACT was customized to fulfil the needs information management needs in the project. A natural way of considering the ACT consisted in structuring the project in topics and work packages as stated in the Description of Work document. This led to a design on two levels: a first level covers general information on the project and important topics. This level is managed by the project leader and by topical coordinators. On a second level, team sites are established for cooperation between partners in work packages. This level contains collaboration feature, and is managed by the work package leaders. Access to the team sites may be restricted to account for possible restrictions on the information handled in the work package. This basic two-level structure is supported by navigation and user help features.

A survey on the usability of the ACT was conducted; the results of the survey will be discussed.