

Technical Specifications for EEA web site user survey and usability study

Introduction

The European Environment Agency (EEA) regards its website as the most important tool for disseminating its information. In order to better serve its clients the Agency wishes to carry out a usability study and a user survey amongst a representative selection of its key clients. The results of the survey will be used to adapt the site more to client demands for information.

History

The Agency has been present on the World Wide Web since late 1995. The first site was a fairly simple collection of static pages, mainly focusing on the organisation as such with a limited amount of environmental information. In mid 1997 the Agency launched an updated website to better present the growing amount of published reports issued by the Agency in an electronic format.

The next major revamp of the Web site took place in October 1999. In this version, the third generation, there is a strong emphasize on better structuring of the available information, mainly by making the information accessible through environmental themes (see themes.eea.eu.int). New in this version was also the use of databases with data used in EEA reporting (dataservice.eea.eu.int) and a special web version for the indicators used in the Agency's indicator based reports (see reports.eea.eu.int/signals-2001/en/page000.html and reports.eea.eu.int/term2001/

The fourth generation

The present version of the Agency's web site was launched in May 2002. The main aim is to better support the Agency's moves from "report producer to information provider". Main motives for this version were:

- A redesign to meet more complex information structures;
- Better integration of a number of services;
- Facilities for regularly updated reporting system;
- Better use of new (browser) technologies and,
- More interactivity with its users.

Key clients

EEA's key clients are defined in the document "[The EEA Strategy. Building effective and reliable environmental information for Europe](#)"

In this document the following key clients are defined as:

- **Potential users of information in the European Commission, Parliament, Council and EEA member countries**, both in the field of environment and in economic sectors affecting the environment, **focusing on** (and distinguishing between): **policy developers, policy deciders, policy implementers and policy "checkers"**;
- Key actors in the general public **who participate in the policy debate, commenting on, influencing and checking policy, disseminating EEA messages to a wider audience (e.g.: NGOs, business, media, advisory groups/persons, debaters and the policy engaged public) thus facilitating their participation in the policy process.**

The general public are kept informed, and access to information is assured, in particular through the Agency's Web.

Though the strategy document points out the Agency's website as a specific instrument to address the general public, it can be expected that key clients will as well make more and more use of it to access environmental information

Target group

As mentioned, the survey should be carried out amongst key clients of the EEA and, more specifically, amongst:

- Users within DG Environment;
- Users within or close to the European Parliament;
- Key players within EEA's network (EIONET)
- Environmental journalist;
- Organisations within the member states (Ministries, agencies as far as they are not cover under bullet 3)
- NGO's
- If possible, members of the general public.

The number of persons to be interviewed will depend on the method. Within the given budget, an e-mail or telephone interview could involve many more interviews than a personal interview. A mix of the two methods could also be used.

The final list of persons to be interviewed shall be drafted at a later stage in co-operation between the EEA and the contractor.

The survey

The survey should address at least the following issues:

- Is the interviewee familiar with EEA's website - if yes, how frequently do they use it;
- Quality of the navigation;
- Quality of the information (content);
- Quality of the design (both graphical, easiness to read, fonts, too much or too little information per page etc.);
- New services that should be provided;
- Present services that should be dropped.

This list may be subject to change as the project progresses.

Usability study

In addition to the user survey, a usability test is to be carried out. This study should focus on:

- The logic of the structure
- The understandability of the terminology
- The overall appeal of the design
- The quality of the navigation tools

Deliverables

The contractor is expected to deliver a draft report for approval and comments by the EEA, followed by a final report covering rules and guidelines to optimise the EEA web site to user needs and requirements.

Place of work

The work can mainly be done at the contractor's premises. Project meetings will take place at EEA premises in Copenhagen or at the contractor's office when appropriate. Travel will also be required when interviews with key clients are held (mainly Brussels).