

Global Youth Incubator

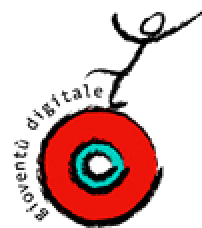
Overcoming Digital Divide

a partnership between

The Glocal Forum & The Digital Youth Consortium



www.glocalforum.org



www.digitalyouth.net

Project Proposal

GLOBAL YOUTH INCUBATOR

The world is entering the 21st century in the midst of despairs and great hopes. Despairs about massive poverty and exclusion of large parts of humanity and hopes of a much better future as we enter the information society with all its promises of inclusion and global development. The issue of the digital divide crystallises in a powerful fashion this mix of despairs and hopes. On the one hand it highlights the fundamental inequities of a world where dreams of dot.coms wealth go hand in hand with the poverty of millions who do not even have access to a telephone. On the other it focuses the imagination and energies of people and institutions in a way that can only reinforce hopes for a better future.¹

Indeed, never for a long time has a better chance existed to make a real improvement in the quality of life of millions of people. There is consensus in that the use of ICTs for development offers an avenue for momentous transformations in the development processes of poorer countries and communities. There is also a consensus in that these countries and communities may be left even further behind and excluded from the benefits of the information society if nothing is done to counteract such a possibility at the present early stages. Most dramatically, today, in the aftermath of the shocking events of 11th September, the world is soul-searching and a consensus is emerging that in the long-term peace and stability requires the elimination of the poverty and exclusion of millions on earth. This redoubles the importance of finding effective ways of tackling the digital divide, as a major long-term contribution to world's development, stability, inclusion and peace. As the President of the European Union puts it recently, "to combat terrorism we must combat the great inequalities" and for this "we must make the market work, but this is not enough, we must make man work."²

This proposal for the creation of a Global Youth Incubator is written in the spirit of contributing to the emergence of a better world at the dawn of the 21st century. It is an invitation to the ICT industry, local and national governments and international organisations to play a leading role in this process by helping to promote the use of ICT for development and social inclusion, with especial attention to the youngest generations.

¹ Often the same theme is referred to as the *digital opportunity*, *digital dividend*, *digital inclusion*, or *digital bridge* to put emphasis on the opportunity generated by ICTs. The spirit of all terms is however the same.

² "Per combattere il terrorismo vanno combattute le grande ineguaglianze." And for this "dobbiamo far lavorare il mercato, ma non basta, Dobbiamo far lavorare l'uomo." (La Repubblica, 28 Ottobre 2001, p.12)

FROM THE GLOBAL JUNIOR CHALLENGE TO THE GLOBAL YOUTH INCUBATOR

The last few years have witnessed the emergence of multiple initiatives and activities aimed at tackling the challenge of the digital divide. The common sentiment is that ICTs can help to nurture an information society for all and that something can be done about it. One of these initiatives is the Global Junior Challenge, the world's largest international contest of projects working on digital social inclusion through the application of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in education and training.³

The first contest took place in 2000 and, now, The Digital Youth Consortium and the City of Rome are launching the second edition of the contest – the Global Junior Challenge 2002. Projects submitted to the Global Junior Challenge include educational and training initiatives for and by children and teenagers up to the age of twenty nine, and they may come from any organisation (i.e., schools, companies, NGOs, civil society) and individual citizens from any part of the world. The winners of the Global Junior Challenge are selected by an international jury and the awards given by the Mayor of Rome in the historical City Hall.

For the first time, the upcoming edition of the Global Junior Challenge will create, in partnership with the Glocal Forum, a framework for bringing together appropriate projects with potential funders in order enhance the impact of the Challenge by actualizing projects on the ground.

Therefore the Glocal Forum and the Digital Youth Consortium are launching the formation of the “Global Youth Incubator” aimed at:

- providing the private and public sector and other relevant institutions with an instrument to make an effective contribution to the battle against poverty and exclusion in the world;
- establishing and nurturing connections between Global Junior Challenge finalists projects and potential funders from international organisations and the private sector.

The formal launch of the Global Youth Incubator will take place at the First Glocalization Conference, planned for next May 2002 in Rome, hosted by the Glocal Forum and the Mayor of Rome.

³ The first edition of the Global Junior Challenge in year 2000 attracted over 580 projects from 80 countries.

The Incubator will serve as a networking platform to encourage existing projects to develop their social relevance, applicability and sustainability.

The Incubator will pursue its aims by:

- establishing relations with potential funders, including international organisations, private sector, NGOs and other organisations who will contribute through expertise and financial resources to the success of worthwhile digital divide projects across the world.
- promoting the formation of a network of voluntary business and technical support to contribute advice and mentoring to the selected projects in full cooperation with the projects developers. This may include mechanisms such as Project Adoption and Business Development Reviews.
- helping broker relations between projects as a way of encouraging emulation of successful practices from one experience to another.

In all these activities, the Incubator should be conceived as a catalyser of synergies within the growing global movement on overcoming ‘digital divide’.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Projects from the Global Junior Challenge initiative that have the greatest potential for effective implementation will become a part of the Incubator, rendering them eligible for possible funding and/or consulting by private sector partners. The Incubator will be led in partnership by the Glocal Forum and the Digital Youth Consortium and include members of the IT industry and international institutions.

A **Board of Directors** will be established and will include senior contributing members of the IT industry, the executives directors of the Glocal Forum and Digital Youth Consortium, representatives of international organisations such as the World Bank, academic experts on digital divide matters and urban experts.

The Digital Youth Consortium and the Glocal Forum will both appoint an incubator coordinator.

Working Groups will be formed in different sectors, acting as “think tanks” to develop priorities and project models in their respective areas, as well as to give recommendations and mentor supports to projects. Each group should be comprised of one IT/digital divide expert, one sector expert and one developmental country expert.

THE PROCESS

The Incubator will be developed through the following stages:

1. Launching at the Glocalization Conference (May 12-14, 2002)

The Incubator will be jointly launched by the project partners at the Glocal Forum's Glocalization Conference to take place in Rome. The Conference will bring together mayors from around the world as well as international institutions, NGOs and private sector companies from the areas of information technology, tourism and public relations.

A special panel session will be held on the issue of digital divide as it relates to cities during which the Global Youth Incubator will be launched. Participants from the IT industry will be given the opportunity to explore this project and consider their participation in its implementation. At this time, a steering committee will be established to lead the project's development.

2. Global Junior Challenge Conference (December, 2002)

The Global Junior Challenge will hold a conference and awards ceremony for all project winners and finalists (about 100). Members of the Incubator's Board of Directors will be present to meet the project leaders and learn about the different projects and explore potential scope for incubating activities (e.g. funding, expertise, etc.)

3. Networking and Incubation

As a constant effort, the Board of Directors will seek for additional partners from the private sector and international organizations for further networking with the projects that have been chosen for the Incubator and for the implementation of its incubating strategy.

4. Publicity for projects

The two organizations will seek maximum exposure to the projects, in order to draw attention on the critical issue of Digital Divide. A special supplement of Metro International newspaper network, which has 10 million reader on a daily basis will be published.

THE PARTNERSHIP

Global Metro City – The Glocal Forum

Global Metro City – The Glocal Forum is a non-profit organization based in Rome. Its activity is dedicated to the bettering of relations among people around the globe, driven by the belief that the forging of inter-city relations can create a more peaceful and just world. To that end, it works to cultivate cooperative activity among urban citizens and their municipal leaders, balancing a global outlook with a strong local orientation. Financed by Metro International SA, the largest international provider of free print media, the Glocal Forum promotes the principle of universal access to information, knowledge and know-how for the citizens of the world. The organization is headed by Ambassador Uri Savir, former Israeli Chief Negotiator of the Oslo Accords and current President of the Peres Center for Peace in Tel-Aviv.

Digital Youth Consortium

The Digital Youth Consortium is a public-private partnership among the Municipality of Rome and six major ICT providers aimed at the dissemination of ICT technologies for education among the young in Rome/Lazio.

It has been built on the foundations of the Global Junior Challenge and is broadly conceived as an alliance of schools and training places, government organizations, ICT suppliers and service providers, and all stakeholders having an interest in, and subscribing to, the goal of a "new educational renaissance" for the benefit of new generations and the sustainable development of the information society in the Rome-Lazio region. More concretely, the Digital Youth Consortium provides organizational reality to the alliance through the definition and implementation of a working model with an evolutionary set of activities and mechanisms combining the short, medium and long term interests of all educational stakeholders. Thus the vision of a digitally-based educational renaissance is undoubtedly in the long-term interest of all stakeholders, however, at the same time the consortium is seeking to create opportunities for the immediate benefit of all active partners. Currently more than 100 schools have joined the activities of the Consortium.