

e-CASTEX



Structuring the European Research Area

Science & Society

Specific Support Actions

e-CASTEX

Project no. 036656

electronic Centralized Access to Scientific Touring Exhibitions

Final Activity Report

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Final version

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A. Executive Summary

The concrete and durable result of the e-Castex project, is EXTRA the first European database of scientific touring exhibitions which has been officially launched during the ECSITE Annual Conference at Budapest (29th May 2008).

At the end of the project, EXTRA is fully operational with more than 350 professionals formally registered and more than 100 Items (exhibitions; exhibits; *specimens*) uploaded.

EXTRA long term management is secured in a Consortium Agreement giving to ECSITE legal power to develop the products and associated service at international level.

During the Year2, partners have directly activated their contacts at regional level and a workshop has been organised for the 12 New Members states in Budapest (14th September).

B. Overview of the activities

The present report gives details about what has been achieved by the project during the second and last year. It is also a final activity report because the reported elements in year 1 have been integrated here in the global presentation of what has been produced in 2 years.

Coordinating activities

In Year 2, EXTRA has been launched thanks to a huge effort to validate rapidly and precisely all technical components and functionalities of the database. A strict schedule of tasks as been set up for the first trimester and correctly implemented by all partners (on-line testing for instance; design of guidance) allowing to announce in advance the date of the public launch on-line at the ECSITE Annual Conference (c. 800 participants).

Afterwards the activities of the partners have focused on the dissemination of the messages promoting the transfer of STEx at EU level. The co-ordinator has constantly exchanged with partners notably to identify key-people or institution and harmonize contact data.

The partners have notably promoted EXTRA during

- ECISTE annual conference (Budapest – 28/5-31/06)
- Natural History Museum inauguration (Toulouse – 29/4-5/5)
- ICOM-NatHist Annual Meeting (Moscow – 9-12/06/2008),
- 5th Science Centre World Congress held in Toronto (Canada, 15-19/06/2008),
- Eastern and Central Europe workshop (Budapest- 14-17/10/2008)
- OCIM Training session on travelling exhibitions (Paris 17-18/11/2008).

End of Year2, the co-ordinator has met bilaterally each partner in their premises to check work progress and achievements.

- P4 (Budapest) : 14/10/2008 (+ P3)
- P2 (Barcelona) : 11/10/2008 (+ P5)
- P3 (Aarhus) : 16-17/10/2008

A Consortium Agreement has been discussed in details and all specific requirements to EXTRA long term management have been implemented in an Article (11) validated by the partners.

RESULTS

- ǒ The fine tuning and the launch of EXTRA have been successful : EXTRA is working on-line without any break since 29/05/2008.
- ǒ All partners have built a reliable list of contacted professionals to be EXTRA Users.
- ǒ EXTRA has been demonstrated to hundreds of science centres and museums professionals
- ǒ A Consortium agreement allowing ECSITE to manage EXTRA has been established and ensures the perennity of the EC investment.

Supporting Activities

During the first trimester of Year 2, e-Castex partners have worked hardly to achieve the database developments by integrating the numerous remarks, comments and critics gathered from experts and potential users in Year 1. All partners have followed and tested on-line the first trial-versions.

The main event has been the launch of EXTRA at Budapest on 29th of May 2008 during the 19th ECSITE Annual Conference.

After this launch, the communication material has been updated according to the evolution of the functionalities. The workflow and the e-Castex partners have disseminated the information regarding EXTRA by using this material (leaflets, posters, stickers, films, etc.) defined in Year 1.

Two Regional workshops have been planed, but only one has been organised as explained below (WP2).

During the last months of the projects, partners have stimulated, motivated and technically assisted their regional colleagues to register and upload their items on EXTRA.

RESULTS

- ǒ At the date of the final report, EXTRA had 357 registered Users and 113 Items among which more than 60% are entire STEX ready to be transferred.
- ǒ In 7 months only, EXTRA has attracted enough professionals to prove its legitimacy and interest.
- ǒ ECSITE has made the highest visibility to its international audience and EXTRA is well known in the "ECSITE family" (> 400 institutions).

WP1 Creation of a European database

T1.1 Creation of a centralised on-line system

Task Leader: ECSITE (P5)

Objective : Launch of EXTRA on-line

Regarding the objectives (a tool for professionals) major adjustments of the prototype have been made to reach the final system currently available on-line at www.extrascience.eu. The system has been developed for further improvement with an open-source approach. Consequently it is running perfectly on Mozilla Firefox but not totally adapted to commercial close products such as Internet Explorer.

Progress towards objectives

Once the production of the prototype of the e-Castex online database was completed in December 2007, ECSITE became actively involved in furthering its development to achieve its final goal of a tool for professional use. All e-Castex partners have constantly provided recommendations and comments for the DB development structure, the interface, the definition of functionalities, and the design of guidance tools.

Seven bilateral meetings were held with the Co-ordination team of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (January 9, 16, 25; February 12, 19; July 7; October 3) and seven other meetings that included the RBINS technician developers (February 26; March 4, 11, 19; April 1st; May 7, 16). Two thorough tests of the entire site were performed by ECSITE and modifications have been implemented and validated from January to the end of April.

All partners were asked to provide formal validation with respect of dead-line and procedures. All comments and suggestions have been recorded “page by page” and examined, “one by one” during the technical meetings described above.

This last phase of technical development has consolidated the comments and users needs collected during Year one from the Consortium partners, the experts invited in Barcelona Strategic Meeting and the professionals testing the tool at the ECSITE Annual Conference 2007 in Lisbon.

RESULTS

The EXTRA database is fully operational and regarding initial plan some dimensions have been clarified :

ð Focus on the core objectives of the tool and the project

The main objective of e-Castex being the promotion of travelling exhibitions, information relating to institutions and people were reduced. The picture gallery for each exhibition was improved, increasing the visual element essential to the promotion of an exhibition. The directory of people was limited to the contact person

of the exhibition, users having expressed a concern about the length of time that would have been required to fill in a complete directory of personnel.

ǒ Institution is central

Since the tool is of professional use, all exhibitions come from an institution. Thus, all exhibitions, exhibits and specimens are linked to an institution as a mandatory procedure. In the same line of thought, all professionals from one institution have access to their institution workspace, allowing for different expertise (for example, museography and marketing departments) to work jointly on the promotion of their product.

ǒ Simplification of uploading

The information presented on the tool now relates strictly to the ones necessary to promote an exhibition, the contractual and negotiation phases being done off line bilaterally. This allowed for a limited number of levels (depth of the application) and for a faster uploading procedure.

All mandatory fields were grouped on one main file and the validation procedure was simplified and grouped. Useful developments were added such as the possibility to copy a file of an exhibition to facilitate similar encoding.

ǒ Graphic design

For financial reasons, graphic design improvements were concentrated on the public part (Search of the front-end, and the upload section) while no additional graphic work was done in the administrator section (Back-end). This graphic design used known computer references such as the presentations in Outlook.

ǒ Security of information (workflow)

Significant modifications were done on the workflow and the validation of the contents, both by the administrator and by the institution uploading an exhibition. With these, the institution has the final responsibility on the published content, yet the administrator can control the quality of it.

ǒ Long term visibility

EXTRA being planned to have a long term use, during the project its visibility refers to ECSITE rather than to e-Castex who's duration is limited.

The home page shows the following footer :

A service of  developed with the support of the European Commission 
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T1.2 First feeding of the system

Task Leader: Budapest NHM (P4)

Objective : identify and stimulate professional from Eastern and Central Europe museums and science centres as new actors on the STEX market.

Progress towards objectives

The original plan was to invite first feeders from among the potential users and let them upload during Autumn 2007. This has been changed due to the delay in the development of the DB as explained in PAR-1.

At the start of the project it was known (from Castex project 2000-2004), that the production and the circulation of STEX was lower in Eastern countries than in the 15 Members States. Science communication is under development in these countries and before presenting EXTRA as a tool to facilitate exchanges it has been necessary to identify actors and the specific situation in which they have to work.

According to the agreed work plan for Year 2, around 120 institutions originated from 22 countries have been identified and contacted. The complete list is presented in Deliverable 1. They were informed about the launching of EXTRA and repeatedly invited to register and upload their items.

P4 also uploaded its own products, together with items of some of the CE European partners, who had earlier sent applicable material. P4 informed these partners and assisted them to be registered users as to publish their initial content in the DB.

RESULTS

- more than 200 new actors (professionals of museums/science centres) from Eastern and Central Europe have been identified then informed and stimulated as potential first feeders and users of EXTRA. Many are already EXTRA Users and have uploaded their production. Other professionals mobilized by EXTRA : Baltic Region, 75 names; Mediterranean, 165 names.

T1.3 Management a centralised human-based system

Task Leader: RBINS (Co)

Objective : mobilize potential Users by providing specific assistance

Progress towards objectives

At the beginning of Year2, to prepare the launch, tens of motivated colleagues have been recorded and their Institution have been created in the system reachable on a secured URL. Doing so, EXTRA has been launched as a system already populated and during the 3 days of the ECSITE Conference many professionals have had the opportunity to upload their items with direct assistance of e-Castex partners on the booth.

The Administrator has produced a User's Guide with the support of all partners and with P3 (Aarhus-NHM) has designed a brief "How to get started " document disseminated as first information package to the numerous requests having followed the on-line launch.

The RBINS IT-Department has edited an Administrator Manual allowing all technical management of the system.

The workflow that require from the Administrator to check frequently the data has proven its efficiency and in order to improve the most frequent practices (validate a User and test its login for instance), some Administrator tools and functionalities have been developed end of Year 2.

This task end with the delivery of the complete system fed with 100 Users and 150 STEX to ECSITE on 01/01/2009 according to the Consortium Agreement. It is obvious that the delay in the launch (M17 /M9) has not allowed the Administrator to reach as many targets has anticipated.

Notably it appears that the new comers in the STEX market need a repeated direct assistance to well understand how to benefit from EXTRA in respect of their strategy or capacity.

In 2009, RBINS will continue to Administrate EXTRA and gradually handing out the system to the ECSITE office team. The Co-ordinator will deliver guidelines and training to the management of the system to ECSITE staff.

RESULTS

ø EXTRA figures (03/02/2009): To date the system host around 110 Items and around 300 professionals.

DELIVERABLE 1 : EXTRA ¹, a centralized system fed with contact details and products, available on-line

Annex 1a: List of EXTRA Users

Annex 1b: EXTRA “How to Get started” manual

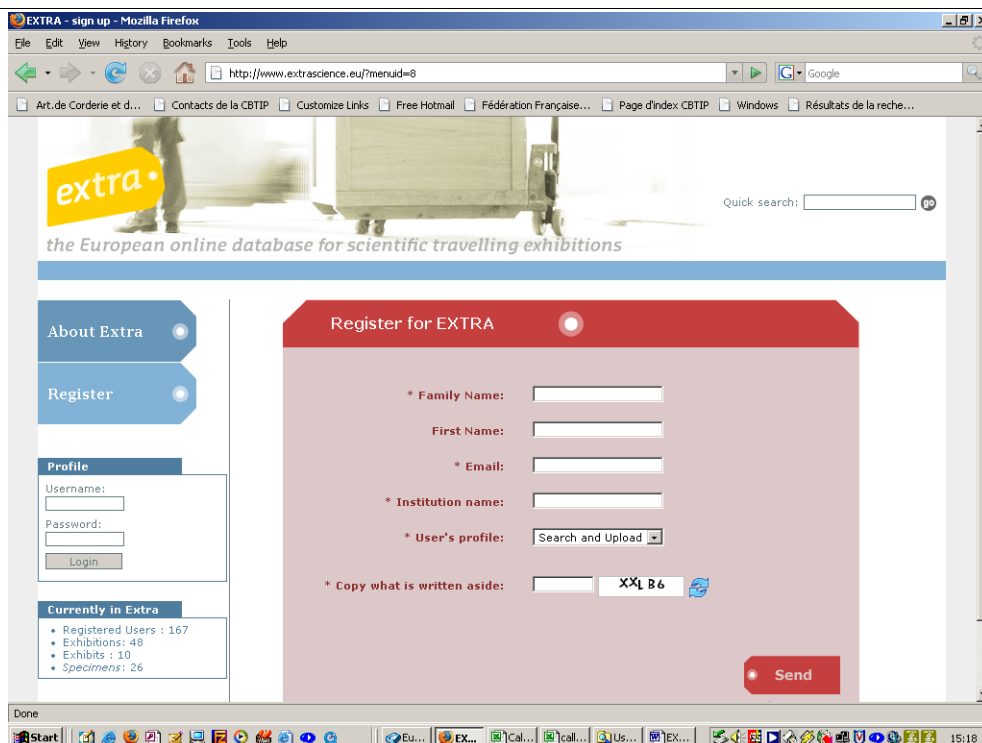
Annex 1c: EXTRA Users Guide

Annex 1d: Extra Administrator Guide

Annex 1e : List of potential Users

- Eastern and Central Europe
- Nordic Countries
- Mediteranean Countries

¹ to test EXTRA go to ; <http://www.extrascience.eu>; login : secours; password: help.



WP2 Set up of a membership campaign

T2.1 Launch of a communication campaign

Task Leader: Barcelona NHM (P2)

Objective : Inform the NHM-SC community after an accurate selection of the targets through clear messages in order to:

- gain their insight
- invite them to enter in the early modelling of the database to provide information when launching the system
- draw the attention of potential users towards the project and invite them to join EXTRA
- diffuse the project towards the science communication community

Progress towards objectives

Setting a list of potential users

P2 has set up a list of potential users around the Mediterranean zone and has invited them to join EXTRA and upload their items. (Deliverable 1)

Promotion of EXTRA

The promotional campaign has been focused in introducing the database to the potential users and to diffuse it, to increase the community of professionals in the sector.

A set of products have been distributed to achieve these objectives and a new version of the leaflet has been produced. This version pointed out the main advantages and benefits to become a user of EXTRA to attract them to register. In Year 2, a modification of the film introducing EXTRA has been made, with the addition of the new web address of the database and changes in the quality of the image and resolution.

P2 has sent EXTRA advertising via PDF document and via mailing to the experts of the Strategic Meeting-Barcelona, to inform them of the new adjustments of the database and in order to send them the New User's-Guide.

As all other partners, P2 has participated in ECSITE-Conferences in organizing the booth. Moreover, P2 assisted in different meetings with professionals on the sector promoting the EXTRA database.

Promotional product	Objectives	Target	Distribution	Copies
Printed leaflet	Arouse interest, presentation of EXTRA database	All institutions that are possible users or feeders	Printed version in ECSITE AC, Regional Workshop, experts meetings and others. Digital version in pdf format sent to the participants and interested institutions.	2500 copies ECSITE conference-Budapest 1150 partners to be sent to their contacts
Serigraphic panels	Attract visitors of ECSITE to the booth of e-CASTEX	Visitors of ECSITE-conference in Budapest		
Film	Explanation and presentation the database	Potential user institutions, experts	Web, launch of EXTRA in ECSITE-Conference and	

	EXTRA	and contacts	presentation during sessions	
Merchandising: Key ring with measuring tape	Disseminate EXTRA web address.	All institutions that are possible users or feeders	Included in the documentation at Strategic meetings and Regional Workshops, and in ECSITE-Conference	800 ECSITE Conference- Budapest, 100 for Regional Workshop
Folder	Contains various documents	Participants in the strategic meetings and regional workshops, international conferences, etc	ECSITE conference, strategic meetings, regional workshops	200to the ECSITE conference Budapest 100 for Regional Workshop.

A large number of scientific institutions have been aware of the existence of the EXTRA database thanks to the promotion actions. Hundreds of participants have visited the stand at the ECSITE conference and left the stand with the conviction that:

- This tool would be very useful to them and would make visible and propose concretely their activities in exhibition transfer;
- The tool was very well done and well conceived;
- Many of them registered immediately visiting the stand.

Many institutions received the User's Guide while they were visiting the stand and registered with the supervision of the partners that were assisting them, explaining how to register and update their products.

RESULTS

- ø EXTRA is well known in the community of producers/renters of STEX. Further promotion should address the "demand" in order to enlarge the number and the type of places where STEX can be presented (local authorities, cultural sector, etc.)

T2.2 Organisation of regional workshops with users

Task Leader: Aarhus NHM (P3)

Objective : mobilize key actors in the transfer of STEX at regional level.

Progress towards objectives

During Year 2, P3 got in contact with Science centers, museums and natural history museums in the northern part of Europe, while P4 focused on Eastern and Central Europe and P2 on Mediterranean countries.

According to the remaining budget and in order to be attractive two workshops have been planed, one for Nordic regions one for Eastern and Central Europe. Many Mediterranean institutions having had stimulated around the Strategic Meeting (Year 1) held in Barcelona (P2).

Regional Workshop1 : Nordic Region

More than 70 institutions were invited to a Regional Workshop in Aarhus to be organized on 2-3 of September 2008.

Speakers were invited and a program was put together in consultation with the coordinator of e-Castex. The conference center Mols Laboratoriet was booked for 40 participants. The concept for the workshop was that P3 paid for the accommodation and board and the participants paid for their own travel expenses.

Unfortunately only 6 participants were able to join the workshop and e-Castex decided to cancel this workshop. Indeed, professionals from UK, DE, NL or FI or SE, who have more or less an experience of temporary/touring exhibitions have reacted directly by accessing EXTRA on-line and many of them belong already to national or international networks. That is not the case for the Eastern and Central Europe countries.

Direct activation

P3 used the autumn 2008 to get in contact, by phone and mail, to as many Science centers, museums and natural history museums in the northern part of Europe as possible. In that way Aarhus-NHM made a promotion campaign for Extra in a very direct way, and had the opportunity to explain what the Extra project was all about. By talking to them on the phone, P3 has guided them through the Extra pages and helped them in a very direct way with problems and questions. More than 100 institutions were spoken to or in contact with in different ways (e-mail; mail).

In addition to a lot of national meetings used to promote Extra, P3 has participated to conferences and museums meetings in Europe to promote and demonstrate Extra.

- 9 - 12 /06/2008 at the NATHIST-ICOM meeting in Moscow;
- 13/05/2008 in Berlin where Natural History Museum and Deutsches Technikmuseum was introduced to the homepage.
- 26 th of November the Planetarium Hamburg, Zoologisches Museum und Museum der Arbeit.

Regional Workshop-2 : Eastern and Central Europe

The Budapest Regional Workshop was organised with support from the European Museum Forum (using the Forum's experience in such workshops, and its network of experts in Eastern Europe). The meeting was held in Budapest, in a training centre of the Council of Europe having appropriate accommodations.

Co-ordinator has delivered information regarding EU science policies and notably Science in Society programme, explained the history of the project and the situation of STEX market in the 15 EU members states studied during previous years. He demonstrates the EU-added value of EXTRA and of the promotion of the transfer of product. Participants represented all 12 new EU Members States and other CE European countries and different types of institutions, being all professionals concerned by the STEX market as a way of improving science communication. On these exchanges, P4 has built a novel picture of the situation of science centres and museum in Eastern and Central Europe.

Direct activation

Besides this large Workshop, P4 has organised or visited the following events:

- Introduction of e-Castex and EXTRA in a museums directors meeting (Marcali, Hungary)

- Building of and assistance in the EXTRA booth during the ECSITE Annual meeting (Budapest)
- Introduction of e-Castex and EXTRA in a natural history museum conference (Szombathely, HU, experts from 3 countries present)
- Regional workshop Budapest (representatives of 12 countries present)
- Introduction of e-Castex and EXTRA in a European natural history museum directors conference (Bucharest, RO)
- Local workshop Beograd (October, Serbian museums representatives)
- Introduction of EXTRA in a conference in Esztergom (November, Hungarian science and technical museums representatives)

RESULTS

- A Social, technologic, economic, environmental and political (STEEP) analysis of the STEX industry in Central and Eastern Europe has been produced to complete the synthetic report about "Museum and STEX"
- The Regional Workshop has produced a report presenting the main results of the discussions and containing the participants opinion about using or producing STEX;
- The EXTRA promotional material (articles; special issues; poster; leaflet;) has been disseminated by all the partners .

Deliverable 2: Results of a promotional campaign covering the whole of Europe

The material produced in this Deliverable is to be used by ECSITE to:

- Continue the promotion campaign with consistent visual message;
- Extend the promotion in Eastern and Central Europe where many “new comers” have to be encouraged.



ECSITE Team at the EXTRA Launch.(Budapest, May 29th, 2008)

(From left to right) : Olivier Retout, Co-ordinator, (RBINS); Catherine Franche, (ECSITE); Tàmàs Vasarhelyi, (NHM Budapest); Anna Omedes (NHM Barcelona); Henrik Sell, (NHM Aarhus)

C. Plan for using and disseminating the knowledge

Objective : install on the long term the EXTRA database as the reference tool for the STEX market.

Launch of the event and professional sessions

ECSITE hosted the launch of EXTRA at its Annual Conference 2008 in Budapest on the first day of the Conference, just after the Opening ceremony. A demonstration was projected on a large screen to more than 400 delegates. The e-Castex booth was well placed in the exhibition area (Business Bistro) and remained for the 3 days of the Conference with Consortium partners always present. ECSITE as the organiser of the Conference worked closely with the e-Castex partners to organise the booth and the launch.

(Extracts from the ECSITE Conference programme)

Extra

Designed by four natural history museums and ECSITE, "Extra," the first European online database for scientific travelling exhibitions, will be officially launched at this ECSITE Annual Conference 2008 in Budapest! Come to the Extra booth and be among the first users to upload your exhibitions/exhibit components/specimens for rent, loan or sale, for free. The Extra team will be at your disposal to guide you around the upcoming tool, tailored to promote the exchange of products on the museum and science centre market.

12:30 – 13:00 Opening of the Business Bistro, Launch of Extra, Refreshments

Catherine Franche, Executive Director, Ecsite, Brussels, Belgium

Olivier Retout, Head of International Relations and Coordinator of e-Castex, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium

Designed by four natural history museums and ECSITE, "Extra," the first European online database for scientific travelling exhibitions, is officially launched at this ECSITE Annual Conference 2008 in Budapest.

The Extra website provides a crucial business tool for institutions in the field of science communication interested in renting, hiring, buying, selling and loaning science exhibitions. The tailor-made database contains dossiers on "items," uploaded by member organisations across Europe. These items can be scientific travelling exhibitions, collections, specimens, objects, models, exhibits, images, films, audio, science shows: anything scientific, cultural and museological to be loaned, rented or purchased by institutions in our field. www.extrascience.eu

The ECSITE Annual Conference also hosted three sessions on travelling exhibitions labelled EXTRA sessions, for which all exhibitions presented were registered on EXTRA. (See Deliverable 2 for a description of these sessions)

ECSITE printed Newsletter and website

A full double page article in the Newsletter, written by the coordinator of e-Castex was published in the ECSITE Newsletter of August 2008, distributed in 1500 copies to ECSITE members and associated partners. (See Deliverable 2). A permanent link to EXTRA is on the ECSITE website.

ECSITE E-news

The ECSITE electronic newsletter (e-News) reaches more than 3000 professionals of the science communication field. Six briefs on e-Castex were published in February, March, April, July, September and October 2008. (see Deliverable 2).

International promotion

The 5th Science Centre World Congress was held in Toronto (Canada) June 15-19. As a member of the International Programme Committee that organizes these meetings, ECSITE had the opportunity to present e-Castex to the leaders of the other science centres networks : ASPAC (Asia), SAASTEC (Africa), Red-Pop (Central and South America) and ASTC (North America and world). This was an excellent occasion to work with multipliers : association who have hundreds of members to whom EXTRA can be introduced. European science exhibitions can be and have been in the past of interest to science centres around the world and can potentially be exported thus increasing their life-span.

Long-term life of the tool

In spite of the efforts the Eastern institutions showed remaining difficulties during the project and the Eastern participation in EXTRA is still to be supported because STEX renting/hiring are not yet fully integrated in their practices of science communication toward the general public.

The data set provided by EXTRA offers nevertheless a framework upon which effective and practical development and communication of a (travelling) exhibition can be performed. Beyond the initial or primary use of EXTRA (STEX transfer) the structure and content of the database will be used for educational purposes in graduate (Science communication MSc) as well as postgraduate (Museum management accredited course) teaching courses.

ECSITE and its Board of directors developed rules of access to the online database that were then submitted to and discussed with the Consortium partners. These are integrated in the Consortium Agreement of e-Castex describing notably how e-Castex partners will continue to supervise EXTRA management via a Steering Committee.

A meeting and discussions were held between the coordinator, ECSITE and the task leader T2.1 (Communication Campaign) to ensure a follow-up of the promotional strategy coherent with the one led during the life of the project.

All remaining material has been delivered to ECSITE at the end of the project.

CONCLUSIONS

- Thanks to the SiS support a new tool dedicated to STEX has been built and offered to professionals for free.
Its long term maintenance is secured thanks to ECSITE engagement and the partners confidence.

- đ The free-access period is prolonged by ECSITE till June 2009 (Annual Conference Milan).
- đ EXTRA is an open-source system and ECSITE will develop services adapted the users demand.
- đ On the long-term, European citizens better benefit from the creativity and the quality of other European science communication products and professionals acquire better knowledge on the best way to present the science to the general public.

Brussels,
February 3, 2009
Dr Olivier Retout
Co-ordinator