

Development of EIONET's CIRCLE Application Platform

Background

CIRCLE is the generic application platform for EIONET's Extranet that currently consists of 33 Unix servers throughout Europe. CIRCLE has been built on standards-based services of the Netscape SuiteSpot on the http, smtp, nntp, ldap protocols and their secure counterparts. The main service of the current CIRCLE is electronic document management, which is integrated with email, discussions, and controlled user directories. CIRCLE has been written in Perl, Java, PHP, and C.

Most CIRCLE functions are provided by CIRCA, which is software tool developed for and copyrighted by the European Commission. CIRCA is available without license charges for public administrations and non-profit organisations.

Further information on EIONET and CIRCLE can be found in <http://www.eionet.eu.int> and links therein such as <http://www.eionet.eu.int/docu/circa21announce.html>

Requested features and services

The CIRCLE will have to be developed further through a regular sequence of releases and patches into the following directions:

- It will have to develop into an integrative platform for more applications beyond the current document management services. This means that it will have to be modular and provide a publicly defined interface into which applications can be plugged in and developed by any party. It shall be based on open source components as much as possible, so that the results can be distributed into EIONET's large network. All developments shall be given by EEA into the public domain, allowing any party or future contractor to participate in development.
- Examples of new types of applications that are needed by EIONET and shall be integrated in CIRCLE include on-line questionnaires, data marts, data exchange between servers, and data visualisation tools.
- Another direction is support to EEA's own administrative purposes, including records management, imaging, and workflow.
- CIRCLE's current rigidly defined group collaboration scheme which is based on closed interest groups shall evolve into a more transparent "corporate portal service" where users can define their interests and will be served by customised information drawn from multiple CIRCLE servers and multiple public web servers. Examples of such services are the major commercial portal sites and especially their "My" services.
- The services will have to be integrated with the latest generation of web-aware office desktop applications so that it will be easy to download and save direct from these applications to CIRCLE. A good integration with email is required. This all means that the CIRCLE will have to develop into an integrated electronic workplace.

Close cooperation with European Commission's IDA Programme and CIRCA projects shall continue and features developed for EIONET can become part of CIRCA where so desired.

The details of the functionalities to be implemented will be specified accurately for each specific agreement that will be made under the framework contract.