

Type 2 partnership proposal presented by the French government

TITLE: Worldwide French sustainable-development information system

PARTNERS:

Sponsors of the initiative (complete contact information):

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Partners:

IEPF (Energy and Environment Institute for French-speaking Countries [*Institut de l'Énergie et de l'Environnement de la Francophonie*]), ALMAE (Mahgreb Alliance for Water [*Alliance Maghreb pour l'Eau*], Morocco), ARISE (Association of Networks Specializing in Environmental Information [*Association des Réseaux d'Information Spécialisée en Environnement*], Benin), CRIDDHA (Centre for Research and Information for Sustainable Development [*Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement Durable*], Haïti), ONE (National Office for the Environment [*Office National pour l'Environnement*], Madagascar), PNGIM (National Programme for Environmental Information Management [*Programme National de Gestion de l'Information sur le Milieu*], Burkina Faso), RIDDAC (Information Network for Sustainable Development in Africa [*Réseau d'Information pour le Développement Durable en Afrique*], Cameroon), etc.

Associated participants:

NGOs, local governments, businesses, international bodies, educational and research establishments, etc.

DESCRIPTION:

A summary description and outline of the connection with Agenda 21 or the Millennium Declaration:

The aim of the project is to create an information and discussion platform for sustainable development that is accessible to the various groups concerned (States and public administrations, local governments and international bodies, associations, the economic sector, scientists and the academic community, and ordinary citizens) by facilitating exchanges and integration of the available data on a network of Internet sites distributed throughout the French-speaking world.

The second objective is to develop the use of French regarding these topics for the sake of linguistic plurality at the international level, thereby helping to reinforce the capacities of French-speaking participants, especially in the organization of preliminary debates for major conferences. This platform is also an experimental ground for research and development into new tools and approaches that will be transferred to the partners. It will be an extension of various projects and actions.

In terms of information, Agora 21 has already produced a directory, a calendar, and a terminology dictionary combined with a thesaurus.

In operational terms, Agora 21 manages or co-manages:

- A general site on sustainable development, www.agora21.org (with about 300,000 actual monthly hits, mailing lists (including Mediaterrre, which reaches 1200 subscribers), and there are 1600 Websites that refer to Agora 21),
- A French-language portal site for preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (www.sommetjohannesburg.org), in partnership with French-language institutions,
- A network of Internet sites on sustainable development [*Réseau de Sites Internet pour le Développement Durable*] (www.agora21.org/residd/), which aims to bring together the initiatives undertaken throughout the French-speaking world on topics related to the environment and sustainable development and to reinforce the capacity of developing countries to create and manage Internet sites,
- The French-language network for liaison and exchange of environmental information [*Réseau de liaison et d'échange de l'information environnementale francophone*], (www.agora21.org/relief/), which is a multi-purpose intervention tool consisting of ten coherent campaigns aimed at increasing the dissemination of information related to sustainable development within the French-language community. This project has the following objectives:

- In terms of information technology, the project is focused on the use of free software (particularly for forums and mailing lists), which encourages interactivity and active participation by the players in sustainable development.
- The Global French Information System on Sustainable Development relies on the resources of the “Agora21.org” site, which will adapt its format in order to offer portal-type browsing (tested on the French-language portal for preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development). Some resources are hosted on “Agora 21.org” and others by partners in the RESIDD and RELIEF projects. Cooperative “partner spaces” will be opened and their content will be managed by external players.
- The concept of geographical and thematic “agoras”, or public squares, which is currently being developed as a part of the RESIDD project, will be broadly consolidated and highlighted within the Global French Information System on Sustainable Development. An “agora” is a sort of cooperative workspace that allows any visitor to publish information in the form of news, contributions, remarks, etc. This space may be moderated remotely and offers a variety of functions: archives, the opportunity to conducting surveys, etc. The physical location of these “agoras” (on the Agora 21.org site or partner sites) does not affect the functions that are developed and structured in order to allow links and exchanges of information among all of the “agoras”. There will be two approaches: national and regional “agoras” and topical “agoras”. The project eventually aims to cover all the French-speaking countries and all the Agenda 21 topics. The management of the Johannesburg portal and the cooperation of the RESIDD members will serve as a model for this future service.
- The structuring of the service and of the information provided will also be handled by the creation of a single forum and mailing lists. The first lists planned will concern environmental law, territorial management of sustainable development, business and sustainable development, and so on.

Expected results:

The primary concern will be to establish priorities in view of the recommendations of the Aarhus Convention and of Chapter 40 of Agenda 21. This involves favouring access to information on sustainable development to help encourage all of the players (States, public administrations, local governments, international bodies, associations, the economic sector, scientists and the academic community, and ordinary citizens) to participate in the debates and in decision-making. The ultimate goal is to cover all of the Agenda 21 topics with the support of a wide array of diversified skills.

ESTIMATED TIMETABLE for implementation:

Beginning in June, 2002, an Internet platform based on the “agora” concept will be launched as a part of the RESIDD project. This step will make it possible to evaluate the functions and capacities of the various partners for working within this system. Beginning in late September, there will be:

- A technical integration of the advances and the documentary holdings of the French language portal site for preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and migration to “agora21.org”,
- Integration of the RELIEF project services (directory database, calendar and terminology dictionary combined with a thesaurus) thanks to the development of context-based navigation by the partners,
- Integration of the “agora” concept and launch of the new **worldwide French sustainable-development information system** platform.

EXPECTED MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Funding: the financing from the *Fonds francophone des Inforoutes* is ending. In the long term, and under normal operating conditions, running the platform will require €300,000, plus moderators and facilitators in the various French-speaking countries. Combined public-private financing would be preferable.

Evaluation process: the number of visitors to the sites could serve as an evaluation criterion. A survey will be conducted among the site users concerning their expectations.

PRESENTATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF INITIATIVES :

The <http://www.sommetjohannesburg.org> and <http://www.agora21.org> sites will be mobilized, as well as the mailing lists (mediaterre@agora21.org).

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Additional information is available on the web site: www.diplomatie.fr

