



## Technical implementation of Country Portal starts

Inkeri Starry, Project Director, MEK

Work on Phase 2 of the CoPoFi project – technical implementation – started on 1 September 2008. The aim is to build a platform for the portal, based on the results of the defining phase and planned to be completed and launched to the public in ten months, by the end of June 2009.

Much more than just a re-launch of the existing visitfinland.com portal, the new country portal will be a very advanced state-of-the-art destination management system.

The time frame is very tight for a project of this size, emphasizing the importance of swift decision making by all parties concerned, the commitment and support of which are also of vital importance. Especially important is the role of the Advisory Group, crucial also in the present phase. The project looks forward to continued excellent co-operation.

The next Advisory Group meeting, Kick-off of Phase 2, will be held 6 October in Vantaa. Invitations are sent by email to all Advisory Group members who participated during Phase 1.

### Operational model

In addition to the technical platform, the establishment of an organisational structure is an important prerequisite for a successful operation of the portal once it has been launched.

The operational structure will consist of networked public and private organisations and rely on partnerships of web sites, bringing benefits to all participants. Finnish Tourist Board (MEK) will be responsible for the operation, bringing together the various players, destinations and regions, the private travel industry and other important partners to ensure widest possible coverage on a national level. On the distribution side, in order to be effective, co-operation and integration will be established with important international services. Specific target markets will be actively focused on according to prevailing market situations.



A plan for the operational model will be presented more in detail in the upcoming Advisory Group meeting on 6 October 2008.

Call for tenders will then be issued for a number of operational roles chosen to be outsourced. The process of tendering will be prepared and run by MEK before the end of Phase 2 of the project.

### Business model

A first draft of the main points of a business model for portal operation will be prepared for the October Advisory Board meeting, giving a first opportunity to discuss more in detail the plans for a business plan which is planned to be confirmed, after expert review and consulting, in October.

## Summer is over...

Manfred Hackl, CoPoFi Project Manager, EC3

... but the next one comes soon and will see the completely new VisitFinland.com portal. After phase 1 of the CoPoFi project was completed successfully at the end of June 2008, we already started with the second phase, which comprises the development of the portal and the implementation of external interfaces.

For this reason the work is broken down into hundreds of pieces, and each of the portal components is developed in a four-steps-process:

- 1) Definition of interfaces
- 2) Review and approval of interfaces
- 3) Development and testing
- 4) Integration and testing

The portal will be put together piece by piece, with each piece being constructed by basically the same process described above. This work is accompanied by different testing and quality assurance procedures, documentation of work, production of training material and other related work.

Also interfaces to external information systems will be set-up in the coming months, either to integrate content from third parties, like e.g. weather information, as well as for the integration of existing booking solutions. Since one of the main aspects of the new visitfinland.com portal is the position as a new distribution channel, special focus is put on the "external interfaces" for the technical integration of existing booking platforms. They are an important aspect when making this portal a prominent access point to existing tourism services in Finland.

Therefore we recommended the so-called "two side integration" last spring, as a way to implement these external interfaces. This allows a higher quality of service for the visitor and will increase acceptance and performance of this new distribution channel. It helps to present the portal to the customer as a trustful one stop access point for traveling to Finland, although the user will be transferred to the external system for the actual booking process.

The external interfaces are going to be established in the coming months to integrate service offers from the accommodation and transport sector. All service providers from these two sectors are invited to join and promote their services via the portal, by making use of the external interfaces.

Another important aspect for bookings is the VisitFinland.com portal's own booking system, which is an integral part of the portal's service offer. This new booking system will be based on a solution provided by Asio-Data Oy and offers especially for smaller enterprises, that do not want to maintain own booking system or that wish to use this platform to sell their products, an easy-to-use and cost effective booking solution.

Despite of the booking services, the second phase will also cover the development of mobile services, community services, portal administration and everything specified in the first phase. This second phase will end June 2009 with the public presentation of the final portal and the official launch.

Of course there is a lot of work to do during the coming months and the next workshop with the Advisory Group, on October 6<sup>th</sup>, will provide enough time for the Finnish tourism industry to discuss the services and the set-up of the portal project. I am looking forward to this opportunity to discuss the project directly with industry specialists!



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## Contact

**MMag. Manfred Hackl**

Project Manager Country Portal for Finnish Tourism

**ec3 Networks GmbH**

Vorlaufstrasse 5/6, A-1010 Wien

Phone: +43-676-842 755 100

Fax: +43-1-522 71 71-71

manfred.hackl@ec3networks.at