The Survey’2004 on ICT (Information and Communications Technology) usage in Comenius projects was a follow-up of a similar surveys carried out in 1998 and in 2001 by the predecessor of Comp@ct – the CoMuNet project. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: firstly, to provide an overview of the current state of ICT usage in school projects, and secondly, to compare the results to the results from three and /or seven years ago.

The structure of the survey

The survey consisted of 24 questions grouped into 6 topics:
– Information on the school
– Information on the Socrates/Comenius project
– ICT use in the school
– ICT use in the school Comenius project
– Personal feelings about the use of ICT in Comenius project
– Personal expectations from Comenius Thematic Networks.

All answers were collected through either on-line (web) form or printed form. Were appropriate the survey form was also translated into national languages. Data collected in both forms was then checked, put into newly developed database and treated (http://www.ik.ku.lt/compact/).

As this format was similar to the surveys carried out in 1998 / 2001 it makes it easier to compare their results and to highlight what has been changed in ICT usage in Comenius projects during the last three/seven years.

Participation

The participants of the 2004 survey included 185 schools from 28 countries across the Europe. The participants comprised 47 Comenius projects co-ordinators and 138 projects partners.

Comparing to the year 2001 the new survey has a much better coverage in terms of countries presented but less responses were received in total. However, it should be mentioned that the majority of new countries presented in the Survey’2004 are the countries from the Eastern Europe (mainly newcomers to the EU) and as a rule they are not so developed in the ICT field as representatives from the Western Europe. Although, it has, of course, an impact to the survey results received, meanwhile, it is useful to see the more complete image of ICT usage across the newly expanded Europe.

Participant Profile

185 schools from 28 countries have answered the Survey’2004. From them 124 (69%) schools are urban schools, 46 (26%) – rural schools, and 9 (5%) – other schools types.

The typical Comenius project co-ordinator was an urban school with approximately 845 pupils, 65 teachers and about 93 computers. The typical partner school had approximately 615 pupils, 53 teachers and about 48 computers; so the coordinating schools are usually bigger and better equipped by computer hardware than the partners schools. The average number of project partners for a typical Comenius school project was 4 - 5.
A comparison with previous surveys results shows a continuing increase of number of projects exploring the ICT, EU Dimension and Arts & Literature thematic areas (see Fig. 1). Although gradually decreasing the Cultural Heritage thematic area remains still the most popular one, followed by the Regional Identity, ICT and EU Dimension areas. A percentage of Comenius projects oriented to the classical science and technology issues as well as projects supporting school-enterprise relations remain quite low.

![Fig. 1. Trends in Dynamics of Comenius Thematic Areas: 1998 – 2004.](image)

**ICT resources and strategies**

The ratio of computers to students in Comenius schools has improved from 1998, when the average was 1 computer for every 22 students. In 2001, the average was 1 computer for every 11 students – a positive change by a factor of two. However, the results of the 2004 survey show the ratio of 1 computer to 15 pupils. Again, it should be mentioned that about the half of respondents represent the new European countries which are not so well computerized as comparing to the Western Europe, especially Scandinavia countries.

In 2004 already 86% of schools (65% in 2001) had developed ICT plans or ICT strategies for implementation within the school. Although, it should be mentioned that 6 of the coordinating schools (15 in 2001) did not have developed an ICT plan. On the individual school level, there was no correlation between the number of computers and the development of strategies, which suggests that ICT planning is more a product of a mindset than availability of resources.

Additionally, 46% (37% in 2001) of schools provided computer qualification courses and certification of computer operating skills (e.g., ECDL).

**Internet access/availability data**

The Internet access has been improved dramatically during the last three years. In 2004 only few schools (2%) had no regular Internet access (compare to 35% in 2001). An average school computerization level and local network coverage have been also essentially increased. In 2004 about half of all respondents have more than one computer class connected to the Internet plus about 40% of schools have computes with Internet access in a school library).
In the majority of Comenius schools, more than 80% of teachers have access to e-mail. In 2004 the number of schools students using e-mail access at school is increased more than twice comparing to the year 2001. Other computer resources at school also became more widely available for the students. In particular, more than 1/3 of schools have provided the access to ICT resources throughout all schools hours and about a half of respondents ensure that ICT resources are available for the school students when regular teaching classes are over.

**Internet usage in Comenius projects**

Of all the intra-project communication media, e-mail became the most intensively used tool— in 2004, 96% of school projects reported regularly using e-mail for project communication. What is mostly changed comparing to the year 2001 is the more intensive usage of web collaborative tools, forums and chats. In some extent, it could be seen as a result of the Comp@ct Thematic Network (and other networks) which activities are mainly oriented to the promotion of the use of collaborative means and tools in Comenius projects.

At the same time, the use of traditional communication channels like phone, fax and snail mail had been gradually decreased. It is confirmed by the diagram presented in Fig. 2 where communication channels never used in a project are ranked.

![Fig. 2. Communication channels that are never used in a Comenius project (%).](image)

In 2004 there is a visible trend to the use of interactive ICT tools in the project activities. Among the project supported ICT activities use of E-mail, dissemination of information through the web and design of web pages take a lead (see Fig. 2). Application of forums and chats is rapidly increasing.

As a result of that, more and more Comenius schools have intensively used Internet services to find school partners (69% in 2004 vs 29% in 2001), a number of schools that developed their own web sites and network services has also increased.
The survey results show that the Socrates/Comenius National Agency Web sites remain a main source of Comenius information in all participating countries. Nearly every participant uses the Socrates/Comenius National Agency Web site to obtain the Comenius information needed. A significant information support is provided also through various School Networks, so more than half of the schools belong to a School Network. The general trend is that of increased reliance on ICT tools for communication, collaboration and information support within Comenius projects.

Experiences and expectations of project participants

The survey results show that the majority of Comenius project participants have intensively used ICT in their projects and have quite positively evaluated their experience. In particular:

- 78% generally or definitely agree with the statement that “ICT has encouraged new teaching and learning methods in my school”;
- 82% generally or definitely agree that “My experience using ICT in the Comenius project has been positive”;
- More than 90% emphasize moderate and intensive ICT use in the project.

Moreover, the ICT activities of a Comenius project have had a positive impact to the general ICT competence at school. In particular, 55% of respondents supposed that the use of ICT within their project has produced a big impact to the teachers’ ICT literacy competence. Even more, 58% of respondents reported that the use of ICT within their project has produced a positive impact to the pupils’ ICT literacy competence.

The survey also shows high expectations from Comenius Thematic Networks with respect to providing ICT means and tools to support collaborative activities, ICT training, and examples of innovative teaching methods.