**DG CNECT: An internal collaborative platform**

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| **Executive summary:** In order to facilitate knowledge creation/ sharing and to de-silo the organisation, DG CNECT (1,100 staff members in Luxembourg and Brussels) created a Knowledge Sharing unit in 2012 (14 staff members). It also developed an internal collaborative platform called CONNECTED, based on the software Jive. CONNECTED enables to collaborate and share information in online groups around documents, blogs, collaboratively create documents, subscribe to news streams, locate expertise, find documents… The platform also allows basic project management and task tracking. CONNECTED replaced the DG CNECT Intranet.  The project was run with an average of 4.5 FTEs per year since 2012. In 2015, the platform was extended to the Joint Research Centre, which operates across 6 locations in Europe. The licence budget is around 300 k€ per year for 18.000 licences. It counts approximately 6,000 active users amongst three DGs.  The project received a strong support from the Director-General of DG CONNECT and now of the Joint Research Centre. The results of surveys and user statistics show the success of the initiative, but some users are still not convinced about the tool. |

# Strategy

DG CNECT reorganized in 2012 to:

* facilitate knowledge creation and exchange (especially from staff in research and staff in regulation who tended to work in silos);
* unleash the creative talents of staff;
* ensure a better integration of R&D, innovation, policy, and regulation.

It did not prepare a full strategy but a knowledge manifesto called the “July Principles” which empowers knowledge workers (by clearly allocating responsibilities for any action), acknowledges the central role of knowledge in processes and identifies “CONNECTED” (based on the software Jive) as the central IT platform for sharing knowledge. This collaborative platform has been chosen to increase conversations horizontally and vertically, gather inputs broadly and quickly, facilitate the collaboration, save time in meetings and listen better to staff.

DG CNECT did not perform a knowledge audit (they have been recently contacted by the company klever about it but did not take any decision yet). However, the Knowledge Sharing team spent about 9 months to consult all units of DG CNECT and design a solution. The team found difficult to apply such a user needs analysis to innovative solutions. DG CNECT did not choose the “single repository approach” by fear of the effort to create and maintain such a database.

# Organisation

DG CNECT counts approximately 1,100 staff members spread over 48 units.

A specific Knowledge Sharing unit was set up in 2012. It includes three sectors (Integration of research, policy and regulation; Connect foresight network; Evidence-based policy) and counts 14 staff members. It was not included in a specific directorate but directly reports to the Director-General.

One policy officer of the unit is in charge of the maintenance of the platform full time and receives support from 3-4 other staff members of the Knowledge Sharing unit. The governance of the platform includes a multi-disciplinary team from across the organisation, including HR, Communications, IT, and user representatives from various user segments, including a permanent seat for administrative assistants / secretaries.

# Processes

An increasing number of processes are moving exclusively to the platform

* All meeting records of senior management and Commissioner’s meetings
* All Commissioner's correspondence
* All documents submitted for a Management or Political decision must be shared for comment in advance in a place accessible to all staff.
* All Parliamentary Questions must be prepared collectively in a dedicated group. (Such questions are frequently very broad and require input from many different parts of the organisation).
* All mission reports are shared on the Platform

A pilot for collaborative editing of briefing was started but suspended later, pending the availability of more user friendly integration with MS Office.

DG CNECT is progressively introducing more features

* Seamless integration with Outlook and Office (For example, the profiles set up in Jive are visible when using Microsoft Outlook, and documents and presentations can be simultaneously edited from MS Office)
* Event handling
* Task and project management

Mobile access via a dedicated, authorised is available on all devices enrolled in the Commission’s secure Mobile Device Management scheme, either Commission devices or BYOD.

# IT infrastructure

The CONNECTED platform is based on Jive technology. It has been chosen after having received inputs from 250 staff and has been compared to other software in the market. It easily integrates with Microsoft products. It includes:

* Chats and blogs features (including one managed by the General Director);
* Collaborative creation of documents (including a tracking of previous versions so that the content created by a staff member is always kept);
* Expertise location with detailed people profiles, the possibility to connect/ follow other colleagues and to set up groups (communities of practice);
* News streams: Users can select the topic they want to follow. Any new content matching their preference appears on their customized CONNECTED page. An email alert can also be set-up for urgent/ important news streams; these streams are intended to allow users to focus on what’s important for them and remove unwanted information from information streams.
* A built-in search engine (able to also access documents not posted in CONNECTED);
* Dashboard (e.g. each unit has its own dashboard with objectives and metrics);
* The possibility to run quick polls and a “Like” feature (including the possibility to see what somebody’s connections “like”);
* The possibility to share documents with colleagues, groups or organisation entities and to receive comments.
* Basic project and task management features that allow collaboration on projects.

The project was run with a budget of approximately 4 FTEs in DG CNECT (including one FTE in the KS unit), and a current licence budget of 291 k€ for 18.000 licenses. In 2014, a onetime support cost of 50 k€ for professional services was used to support a major revamp of the site and help with the mobile access deployment. The large licence volume has allowed DG CNECT to keep the platform openly accessible across the whole Commission (CONNECTED currently has approximately 6,000 registered users in total).

The IT infrastructure is hosted in the data centre of DG CNECT inside the Commission’s firewall; this is in line with current guidance on avoiding exposure of Commission documents to cloud environments.

# Culture/ Change management process

DG CNECT replaced its Intranet with the CONNECTED platform on 1 July 2012, at the same time as the organisational change and new naming of the DG. The Director-General is strongly supporting the project. He manages his own blog and staff members can comment on it. The CONNECTED team also leveraged ambassadors in different units to promote the tool.

By default, all documents are accessible by anybody. Restrictions are exceptions and have to be justified to the community manager.

DG CNECT conducts several surveys each year to measure staff satisfaction. Statistics on collaboration are also collected via the IT interface. In 2013, approximately 25% of staff was creating new content and 50% was engaging (i.e. commenting, linking, editing) with content published. 90% were at least viewing content.

84% of staff claim that they are more aware of what’s going on. 72% of interviewed staff say it's easier to collaborate beyond their unit. But some staff is still not convinced about the solution: They find it messy and have a hard time to find back some documents.

Other DGs are joining the initiative: The JRC joined CONNECTED during spring 2015, and the European Policy and Strategy Centre is experimenting with the platform.

DG CNECT estimates that ease of use, the end-to-end support of mobile business processes, and deep, seamless integration with existing software are key success factors, as is real-user centric governance and agile delivery.

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# Sources

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