ICT in rural areas – the Hungarian case

Mihály CSÓTÓ

Information Society and Trend Research Institute
Budapest 1111, Stoczek u. 2-4, Hungary
E-mail: csoto.mihaly@ittk.hu

Abstract

Majority of Hungary's territory come under „rural" category in EU-terms. The number of registered farmers are also high and they are facing seriuos difficulties in the european market and policy as a newcomer. For all these farmers obvious choice would be to use ICT overcoming the existing problems. But that's not happening. Recent study (World Internet Project) says Internet usage isn't growing rapidly – and the financial reasons are not the most important factors of the ignorance – there are cultural barriers as well. Personal interaction dominates the dissemination of information in agriculture – is there any opportunity to couple ICT and these projects? Recent activities are tending into that direction.

Key words

Rural ICT useage, New Member State, dissemination of agriculture related information, Extension, Telecottage
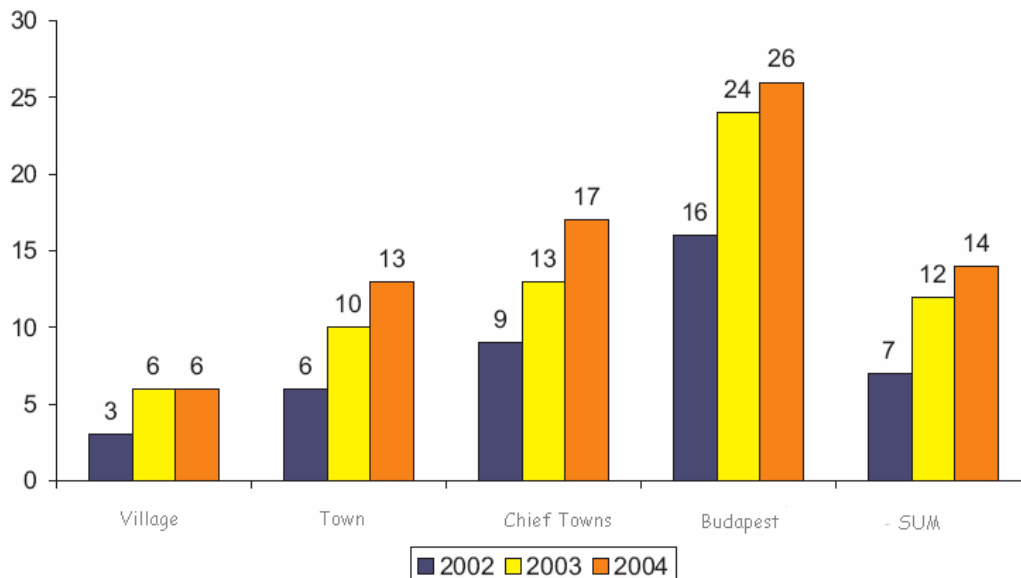
Introduction

„I walk on meadows run to weed,

on fields of burdock and mallow.

I know this rank and ancient ground -

this is the Magyar fallow."

(Endre Ady: The Magyar Fallow)

Hungary is lagging behind the CCE countries in most indicators of information society. The Internet useage is stagnating, especially in rural areas, internet have only reached the quarter of the population. Despite this fact, broadband share in this limited penetretion is really high (67%) which sows us that heavy users dictate the pace in Hungary – villagers (and farmers) don't capitalize on ICT. There are over 200 000 farmers in Hungary, needing a huge amount of information – especially experinece a whole different market and subsidy policy after becoming part of the European Union. What can be done to reduce the range of deficits?

The state of Hungarian information society in rural areas

The results of the World Internet Project (WIP - a 10-year, longitudinal study as part of the international research) shows that the dissemination of ICT (and especially the internet) are slowing in Hungary. The number of users are limited, and not growing rapidly and the

ineternet usage in villages is very low (1. table) which often team up with the lack of infrastructure is.

1. table Internet penetration in Hungary

Behind this facts there are financial and cutural factors, and the mental-barrier looks stronger than any other factor – while people (especially farmers) are realizing the lack of information. What could be done in this circumstences? Paralel with this, WIP recent datas say in small village awerness is growing about e-government transactions in telecottages. Public access points are gaining momentum in villages with less than 1000 inhabitants.

The answer: a human interface-modell?

Information dissemination dominated by personal interactions in agriculture in Hungary. The Ministry of Agriculture has two network (one for experts and one for mainly helping farmers to cope with administration), there is an EU-funded eFarmer projects promoting the same model (train computer using farmers who will acting like nods in the future). There is a civic intiative for IT mentors in telecottages. The main players of this field recognised the problem, but there is still a question mark: can this initiatives and good examples combining with new experineces overcome the barriers?

Literature

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