



European Commission - DG Press

### Industry

Public

### Business Issue

Get timely detailed feedback on visitor behavior

### Solution

SAS® Web Analytics

### Benefits

Greatly enhanced daily qualitative reports that allow Europe to monitor its e-communication. The EC is now perfectly positioned to meet the information demand from public bodies, citizens and businesses.



"In order to appraise the return on its Web site investments, the European Commission needed completely accurate knowledge of its audience. And that is exactly what SAS delivered."

**Louis Georges,**

Project Coordinator for the EU Internet portal

*The Power to Know.*

## SAS helps increase EU Web site audience

### Timely reporting for more efficient e-communication

Ten million visits per month. Two hundred official Web sites. These are the numbers that put EUROPA (<http://europa.eu.int>) among the world's biggest and busiest Web portals. It also provides a unique opportunity for the European Commission management to continuously improve contacts with their public. Provided of course, that detailed feedback on visitor behavior is available in a timely manner.

#### One of the biggest portals, and still expected to grow

Given its increasing success, the Internet has become a key communication tool for the European Union (EU). EUROPA, the gateway leading to the Web sites of the European Commission (EC) and other European Institutions, accounts for more than ten million visits each month. It consists of about 200 main sites and involves more than 200 publishing teams. Every month, almost 100 million e-pages produced by the European Union are read in 20 languages. Final figures for 2004 are topping one billion pages.

Considering those figures, EUROPA is among the world's biggest and most consulted Internet portals. With the addition of new Member States, even these impressive figures are certain to grow over the upcoming years. "Ten million visits represents only two per cent of all EU citizens," explains Louis Georges, project coordinator for the EU Internet portal. "The growth rate over the last few years has been around 30%. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Europe to better meet the demand for information emanating from public bodies, citizens, and businesses."

#### Analyzing visitor behavior

To achieve this goal, Europe needs to know how the Internet medium reaches its targeted audience. "Both information and communication must be considered as a classical commodity, that is to say, they are subject to the law of supply and demand. Because they are responsible for Europe's portal, the EC has to appraise its return on investment for every Web site housed by EUROPA. This means

adjusting sites as necessary, the same way a well-run business handles such a situation. And it requires a complete knowledge of the audience including the number of visitors, most popular URLs, visitor behavior, efficiency of IT infrastructure, etc.

However, compared to traditional methods, e-communication is much more complicated to assess. The volume of data to be analyzed is one of the biggest in the e-world. Add to that the fact that the previous system was not able to support such a load and it is immediately obvious why the EC decided to find a more satisfactory solution.

#### True partnership for autonomous solution

The requirements were demanding. Besides the capability of processing a huge amount of diverse data, the system had to be able to work more precisely and much faster. In contrast to the previous solution, the EC now insisted on having all reports available within 24 hours. Moreover, the new application had to enable the Web sites' existing filtering and comparisons, central and local manipulations, global and detailed reports, among others. Furthermore, the EC was expecting a true support service from its supplier.

At the end of the adjudication procedure, the EC signed a contract with SAS. "SAS' proposal conformed to all our requirements," declares Georges. "It furnishes 45 reports every day for each of our 200 Web sites. What's more, the reports are accessible as early as the next day, which is a great achievement." SAS also offers valuable technical assistance and the flexibility of their solution is particularly appreciated.

#### Daily reporting

The new reporting solution provides feedback on such essential parameters as the number of visitors, the most viewed pages, the selected paths, and the moment when visitors leave the site. Reports cover all the Web sites accessible from EUROPA. They are available in either a standardized format or based on user



“SAS software generates precise reports on the surfing behavior of our Internet audience within 24 hours.”

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queries. They are selected by area of activity, category, and time span. All reports are accessible EU wide through a simple browser. Moreover, the reports are exportable to other IT applications for further analysis. Today, the process provides 15,000 accurate and up-to-date reports each week. SAS transforms up to 15 Gb of daily Web log files into useful information.

From a technical point of view, the EC's new application is a central self-running system. The input data is stored in proxy Web logs before it is processed. An extraction process loads the Web mart once a day. Reports on all the EUROPA Web sites and subsites are available within 12 to 18 hours. After analysis, the data is published on a dedicated Web server. Reports are then stored in a specific directory for every site owned by the various webmasters.

#### **Increased efficiency**

With the SAS generated analyses, webmasters know whether their Web site contains what visitors are expecting. Based on the observed behavior of the audience, they can adapt the navigation schemes, eliminate unpopular pages, or even correct broken links. These insights keep EC webmasters informed about the reasons for success or failure. This

valuable feedback helps IT managers within the European Commission to correctly dimension and plan the necessary telecom and hosting equipments.

The result greatly enhances the quality of daily reports, allowing Europe to better monitor its e-communication. According to Georges: “SAS has helped us reach our goal of offering the most appropriate service to each of our visitors, whatever URL they are consulting. The navigation indicators help the European Commission to manage its resources much more efficiently and obtain the desired results. Now, we are perfectly positioned to meet the information demand.”

#### **Smooth project implementation**

The project is the result of a close collaboration that began in July 2003. “From the beginning, our partnership with SAS worked smoothly and achieved consistently excellent results,” explains Georges. “The relationship has always benefited from good communication and mutual confidence. SAS drew up a list of all the elements they needed to prepare the job properly. We knew exactly what was expected from us. Thus, we were able to hand SAS the precise data they needed. This included such things as configuration, memory features, and

deadlines. This was a tough job, and involved an elaborate analysis of the EC's current and future needs.”

The three-month development period was carefully and fully exploited by SAS to complete analyses, fine-tune, and test the software before the migration. All this groundwork led to the creation of the secure and automated reporting application based on a central self-running server.

#### **Reactivity and flexibility**

In spite of all the careful planning, after two weeks of processing, the system presented a memory shortage due to the gigantic volume of information it had to handle. SAS' intervention was immediate. “For a few days, SAS specialists worked on the redefinition of a long lasting solution. They put their time and knowledge at our disposal and offered to replace the 32-bit application with a 64-bit one. Such reactivity and flexibility is not only greatly appreciated, it is indispensable. They proved their capacity to face a problem and solve it efficiently,” Georges reports. “Today the software is totally reliable. And we have already started work on new developments.”



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