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## INSIDE:

**“Get Online!” Day Connects More than 21,000 Romanians** 1

**ANBPR SET TO PROVIDE UP TO 2000 VOUCHERS FOR ONLINE LEARNING TO PUBLIC LIBRARIANS ACROSS ROMANIA** 1,3

**GALATI COUNTY LIBRARY ADDS FREE PUBLIC ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY** 2

**REGIONAL JOURNAL: LOCAL LIBRARY IS AN INVESTMENT PRIORITY FOR VILLAGE MAYOR IN TULCEA COUNTY** 2

**ON THE GROUND: ROUND 2 BIBLIONET COMMUNITIES BEGIN INVESTING IN LIBRARIES** 3

## “Get Online!” Day Connects More than 21,000 Romanians

Partnering with organizations from more than 15 countries, the “Get Online!” campaign connected more than 21,000 users to the internet in locations throughout Romania. Organized during the European eSkills week March 1-5, the Get Online! campaign was coordinated by the EOS Foundation along with the World Bank “Knowledge-based Economy project.”

Thirty-one libraries, 13 e-centres and 11 places with public access internet hosted Romanian citizens in diverse programs intended to increase awareness of the benefits of access to information. For example, in Cluj, county program coordinators organized training courses for computer literacy. Participants were introduced to innovative job search methods. Farmers explored micro-funding projects to benefit their livestock and pensioners accessed websites that provide nutritional information and planning.

Gabriela Barna, Director of the EOS Foundation in Romania and Coordinator of Get Online!, said “although we wanted to attract online as many people as possible, the numbers of those who registered at [www.ecentre.ro](http://www.ecentre.ro) on March 4<sup>th</sup> Web was a surprise even to us; this confirms the power of community involvement in a national network to support digital engagement.”

The event also attracted support from the



**Young participants use library computers during the Get Online! Day in Suceava County**

local media. According to project participant Gheri Judi from the Valea lui Mihai library in Bihor, “many read about the event in newspapers or online or heard about it through acquaintances—people who never before came to the library for books in the 19 years I have served here, came now.”

The Get Online! day, as well as other efforts to introduce new users to digital technologies is an important part of increasing public access to information for all. As 90-year old participant Nicolai from Berchisesti in Suceava county put it, “A computer mouse is as important to earn a living today as the crutch I use to walk.”

## ANBPR Set to Provide Up to 2000 Vouchers for Online Learning to Public Librarians Across Romania

The ANBPR, with support from its partner Microsoft Romania, is planning to provide 2000 vouchers for public librarians to take advantage of online learning courses. The interactive courses are designed specifically for librarians and will cover IT topics to help librarians better serve library users with varying levels of IT knowledge.

ANBPR and Microsoft Romania recently announced the agreement and are currently

developing a policy to make the vouchers available to public librarians across Romania as a new professional development opportunity. Course participants will access the courses online through an internet connection.

According to Paula Apreutesei, Business Strategy Manager of Microsoft Romania, the ability to help librarians and library users with IT

## Galati County Library Adds Free Public Access for Community

On March 10, the Tecuci Town Library in Galati County officially added free computer and internet access to a growing list of library visitor services.

Library Director Manuela Cepraga explained that his library feels it is important to help users access different types of information. "The operation of a modern library is tightly linked to computers and IT. The strategic development mission of the public library is one of cultural-information center that offers users both print and electronic materials, via free access to new media, and secures the production and publication of information, direct or e-access to various data bases and documents."

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, community members were invited to use the newly installed equipment; community police, children, and school principals all tested the new technology, alongside 20 librarians recently trained in

modern library service management.

Neighboring county librarians attending the event will soon have their own opportunity to participate in the program. Over the next four years, Biblionet expects to equip up to 2000 Romanian libraries and train up to 2500 librarians.

The Mayor of Tecuci, Eduard Finkelstein, was also present at the event, along with the Prefect of Galați County, Cosmin Paun, a member of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Silvia Nestorescu, Deputy-chair of the ANBPR, Liviu Dediu, and several representatives from the local council. Explaining why Tecuci decided to invest in its library, Diector Cepraga said



**Tecuci Town officials welcome the library's new services on March**

that extensive access to information will help his community members gain the necessary skills to fully participate in today's world. "A community where everybody has internet access fares much better from many points of view; its members have more opportunities to use their creativity, come up with novel ideas that can be capitalized on locally and can join efforts so as to improve their quality of life."

## Regional Journal: Local Library is an Investment Priority for Village Mayor in Tulcea County

Luncavita may seem like just another small village in Tulcea County, but there is a lot more to this rural community than you may think.

The village is lucky to have a mayor dedicated to investing in Luncavita and finding new ways to accomplish relevant community projects. The latest such community investment is centered around the public library, set to join the Biblionet program's second round this summer. We traveled to Luncavita to visit the library and learn about the important community projects that are already taking place there.

The Luncavita public library is located in the center of the village, surrounded a beautiful park and situated in a well-maintained building that houses the cultural hall and a community telecenter funded through the World Bank Knowledge Economy Project called a P@pi Center. We were planning just to meet with the librarian, but Constanta Andone insisted that we stop by the mayor's office as well.

Mayor Ilie Stefan greeted us with a big smile on his face, "Welcome to Luncavita!" he said. "I was expecting you." He immediately began describing the first time he heard about

the Biblionet program and how he wrote an open letter to the County Library and every Mayor in Tulcea County encouraging them to apply to the program.

Mayor Stefan is no stranger to seeking out new development opportunities for his community. "There are so many grants out there that are designed to help communities that it's a pity not to apply for them", said Stefan, noting he doesn't think it's worth his time as a mayor to spend all day complaining about the town's financial situation. Mayor Stefan's accomplishments are proudly displayed on the city hall's website: waste collection system, new school buses, planting the most urban trees in Romania in 2008, adding public lighting, plumbing and water purification systems. The list goes on.

So when Biblionet recently opened its application process for public libraries across Romania to join the program, Stefan not only embraced the opportunity, but actively encouraged neighboring mayors to do the same. And when several



**Mayor Ilie Stefan (right) has been advocate of library development in his community**

neighboring communities needed guidance on the application process, Stefan put together an example application so his colleagues could better understand the process.

As we left Mayor Stefan added that he now views the library as a center to foster all types of future community involvement. The Luncavita library certainly has an active partner in Mayor Stefan, "My door is always open," he said.

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## On the Ground: Round 2 Biblionet Communities Begin Investing in Libraries

Communities across Romania are gearing up to participate in the Biblionet program. Another 300 libraries in 18 new counties are partnering with Biblionet and set to receive computers and training in summer 2010. IREX staff visited libraries as a part of the application evaluation process for the second round and came away with several examples of how these new libraries are already changing.

### Prahova County

At the Municipal Library in Mizil, Prahova County librarians are currently in the process of moving into a new library building that was donated to the Cultural Centre and Municipal Library of Mizil by the Mayor of the town, Emil Proscan. The 150 year old historic building was donated to the town years ago by Leonida Condeescu to be used as a cultural center and local officials decided to move the town library there along with a slate of new investments including participation in the Biblionet program.

When Mayor Proscan heard about the Biblionet program, he worked with the Prahova County Library in order to learn about the program's eligibility criteria and application process. In order to meet program requirements, local officials decided to invest in library—relocating it to the new building and agreeing to fund an ongoing internet connection.



### Gorj County

In Albeni village in Gorj county, librarian Mariela Borcan has committed to finding innovative ways of bringing new visitors to her library. Borcan developed a project and partnered with PETROM—the largest oil and gas company in Romania—to open an ethnographic museum on the premises of the library. The museum offers an impressive display of local costumes, household items, and other artifacts that were collected by Borcan from the entire county. After the museum opened, the number of library visitors increased as new community members and even tourists began visiting the library. Looking forward to now partnering with Biblionet, Borcan said that the new services she plans to implement through the program will bring even more visitors and new opportunities.

*Continued from page 1*

skills is increasingly important for public libraries. "A study of the International Data Corporation reveals that over the next five years more than 90% jobs will require IT skills. Thus was born the program and the e-aptitudini.ro portal, where we are honored to work with ANBPR."

Apreutesei says that these courses are particularly relevant for librarians because they "know [how] to attract into the library those ones who still do not know [how to use a computer.]" The librarians kit will include basic technology information, Windows Live Essentials, and over 350 lessons covering Microsoft Office applications, said Apreutesei.

Viorel Carbanaru, General Manager of Pro-Management, one of the firms involved in developing the courses, describes the courses themselves as fully interactive. Course participants

will "see how to do" each step "including descriptions and simulations step by step of the operation. After each example, the user will be asked to perform the exercise on their own.

The ANBPR is looking to use this new partnership to expand the type of services it offers its members—particularly through professional development opportunities such as this. According to ANBPR Executive Director Ioana Crihana, "Nowadays, the need for training is felt more acutely in the librarian field, either we spoke about traditional training or its online version."

Crihana has high expectations about how newly trained librarians will change their communities. "The experience of computer-assisted study will show its results soon in the efficiency of the librarians and will improve the quality of the library services."