

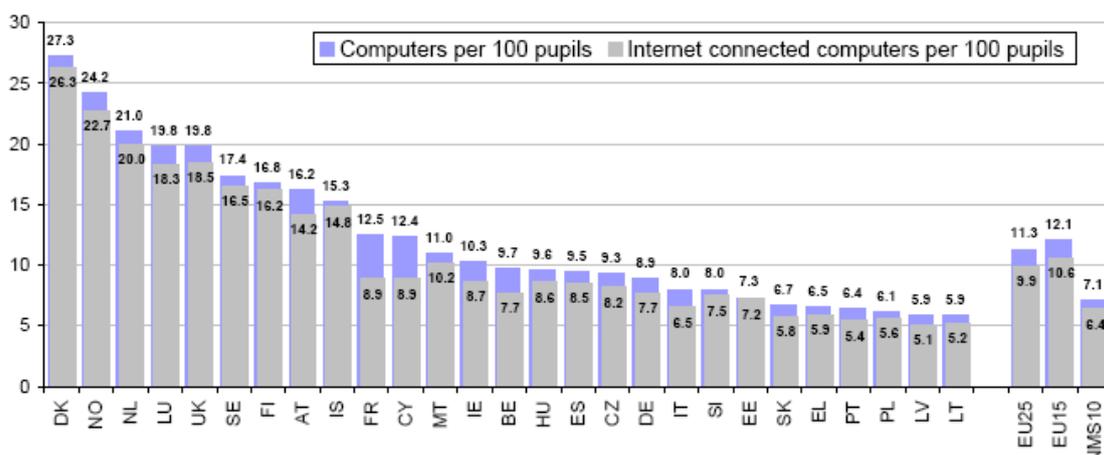
European children please also, They deserve Negroponte's 100 Dollar computers

Negroponte makes excellent arguments for the benefits children in the developing countries will get from the 100 Dollar computer:

- "Even in the developing parts of the world, kids take to computers like fish to water"²
- "Children would be able to take the computers with them wherever they go, learning languages, math, science, geography, and economics, as well as playing games and chatting online with friends. They will likely also be able to use the devices to draw and compose music"²
- "Through the Internet, the computers will also provide a connection to the wider world, potentially creating a sense of openness and global community that could counter ills such as terrorism"²

The question is would European children also enjoy the same benefits from the 100 Dollar computer? Actually Negroponte confirms this by saying "Even in the developing parts of the world, kids take to computers like fish to water," Children are children all over the world. So why is the discussion only focusing on the developing countries? We know there is a digital divide between developed and developing countries. But there is also a digital divide within Europe. Let us look at some recent statistics¹

Figure 2: Number of Computers per 100 pupils in European schools 2006.



This recent statistics shows that Europe is still far away from having one computer for every pupil. On the average 9 pupils share a computer in European schools. There is a digital divide in Europe. There are frontrunners like the Nordic, UK and some Benelux countries followed by France. Germany lags behind with 11 pupils having to share a computer. Even some new EU members like Hungary and Czech Republic are better off. At the end of the list are new EU members Latvia and Lithuania with 17 pupils for every computer.

What about applying the Negroponte vision to Europe also? Computer for every child or pupil in Europe? If EU is to have a chance to live up to the Lisbon agenda³ computers and use of computers has to become a way of life and having computer a part of quality of life. If not Europe is going to fall behind.

For some the Negroponte computer is small and simple. But it is multifunctional and likely to inspire new generation of laptops. And it is designed to last. It is somewhere between a toy and a tool⁴



There are about one hundred million pupils in European schools⁵ so the economy of scale is obvious. What about the information technology industry? Will they be losing millions of Euros on it? Definitely not. When those kids grow up they will outgrow the 100 dollar computer and buy more sophisticated one. Actually, the industry should donate a 100 dollar computer to all pupils and write off the costs as marketing costs. It would only be about 10 billion dollars or 7, 5 billion euros, only a fraction of their advertising budget.

Those pupils will be customers for more advanced computers as they grow up. Also the parents will become passive users of the technology as they watch their sons and daughters play on the 100 dollar computer. Many will join their kids and buy their own computer. This could be the most successful computer marketing campaign ever made.

What is needed? We need visionaries like Negroponte. And we need governments to put his vision into practice. In the EU we need a frontrunner country to become a best practice country for others to follow. And the EU itself? The EU should recognize this as a promising and really a cheap instrument to support the Lisbon vision for 2015.

What do you think? Share your thoughts on this with us at CECUA.

Dr. Jon Thorhallsson
CECUA President
jon.thorhallsson@cecu.org
www.cecu.org

¹ empirica LearnInd Hear Teacher Surveys 2006
Benchmarking Access and Use of ICT in European Schools 2006: Results from Head Teacher and A Classroom Teacher Surveys in 27 European Countries.
(c) empirica Gesellschaft für Kommunikation- und Technologieforschung mbH 2006

² A Hundred-Dollar Laptop for Hungry Minds, <http://www.techreview.com/Infotech/14793/> ,
September 28, 2005,

³ During the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon (March 2000), the Heads of State or Government launched a "Lisbon Strategy" aimed at making the European Union (EU) the most competitive economy in the world and achieving full employment by 2010

⁴ MIT's \$100 Laptop Photos, [MIT's 100 Laptop Photos](#), September 28, 2005

⁵ Eurostat