> Project **showcase**

Simplifying Internet service creation to support local businesses

The ITEA software Cluster LOMS has made it possible to easily combine template-based Internet service creativity with the rich, powerful features of a well-controlled service environment. A wide range of large and especially small service providers can benefit from the LOMS framework methodology and open-source tools, allowing even end-users themselves to offer their own services and content without needing technical know-how.

Many telecommunications network operators are keen to be more than simple bit-pipe providers. They want to offer a portfolio of services that address the so-called 'long tail' of smaller service markets among their large customer bases and that they could manage and charge for according to flexible business models, while keeping their operational costs within justifiable limits.

At the same time, more and more businesses want to use Internet and Internet technologies to market their products and services, particularly to local mobile users. However newcomers to the Internet face many technical hurdles when trying to introduce innovative and widely-available e-services to the general public or to targeted customer segments.

This is a particular problem for small companies, independent professionals and other individuals that do not have the technical know-how in-house. While various attempts have been made over the past few years to offer simplified programming environments, technical knowledge is still required. LOMS therefore set out to provide a mechanism where service creativity combines easily with the rich, powerful features of a well-controlled service environment.

It has achieved this by the introduction of new intermediaries in the value chain. These consist of enabling services on service platforms and service operators offering layers of service templates for specific application domains that can be easily individualised and used with no technical knowledge.

"We could have simply developed an easier programming environment but this would still have required programming knowledge," explains project leader Marc Roelands of Devoteam Telecom & Media in Belgium. "The service templates encapsulate the service components in a transparent manner for the service providers. As a result, local businesses can now easily launch smarter services through more channels."

Agile service creation
The objective of LOMS was the establishment of agile service creation through partnerships and alliances while resolving the complex technical implications of such models as well as the service-creation process itself. This involved both the notion of 'local' services tailored to a specific community or geographical area and the idea of an ecosystem of such services.

To populate such an ecosystem, LOMS introduces a number of intermediate value chain actors in the service-creation process:
- **Platform operators**, who provide the run-time platform and present network-related enabling services through it;
- **Service operators**, who add domain-specific knowledge into LOMS service templates for a specific market sector; and
- **Service providers**, who drive the market by launching new services based on LOMS service templates addressing the demand of their specific – local – market niche.

LOMS identified these service templates as the simplest way to provide those in the service-operator role with a means to encapsulate their domain or technological expertise for easy use directly by service providers, or by higher layer service operators.

The approach has been demonstrated in two different domains:

1) **Local news publishing** – a business-to-consumer application that involved map-related news items, as well as personalised TV community news. Readers could log on to their mobile phone or TV and access news feeds of direct local interest; and
2) **Machinery field service** – a business-to-business application that allowed automation of the field force network, combining electronic customer relationship management (eCRM) with specialised workflow control.

Commercial exploitation
Some of the elements developed are already being exploited commercially. In Belgium, the LOMS approach makes it possible to offer niche digital TV services over an IPTV network; while in Germany, a newspaper in Stuttgart is already offering a map-based local news service in co-operation with an Internet mapping provider.