



EGIN
European Graphic/Media Industry Network
Box 2500
S-104 22 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46-8-692 46 84 • Fax: +46-8-692 46 19
E-mail: egin@egin.se • Web page: www.egin.se

The Networking Story 1990–2000

EGIN
The Networking Story

The Networkers

Joep van Maaren Conny Larsen Karsten Krummes
Peter Larsen Knut Holmqvist Chris Green Herman
Willemse Lauri Norvio Hjörtur Gudnason Poul
Madsen Poul Kjølholm Maisa Laitinen Antti Paasio
Jaap van der Heiden Milan Taylor Jean-Pierre
Boulliot Roger Andersen Ad van Boven Finn
Andresen Tria Louwes Arie van Tilborg Rene van
den Heuvel Lena Halonen Anne König Anders Vejen
Gerrit Roseboom Raimo Launonen Pekka Lahtinen
Erik Stensen Frank Kat Marie Silfverstolpe Bo-Eric
Ericsson Torben Hansen Ulla Gorm Pedersen Georg
Páll Skúlason Olli Korhonen Rense van der Heide
Svein Erik Ruud Truuus Boomgaard Anders Skattkjaer
Lex Bergers Anne Salovaara Wim Visser Flemming
Roed Jensen Otto Pedersen Robert G Picard Anders
Mosumgaard Ketil Sivertsen Hans Danielson Ewa
Axvallen Janne Korhonen Bo Valsted Sotiria
Simeonidou Maija Vähämäki Pertti Lindroos Leo
Ibsen Ulf Lindqvist Paddy Morgan Jørjan Jansson
Marc Goddefroy Jan Langeraert Göran Lange
Margaritha Gemeiro Gudmundur Kristjanson Peter
Lynas Anastasios Politis Knut Grav Bo Estmer Karl-
Heinz Kaschel-Arnold Ruth Exelby Hans W Berglund
Helene Juhola Wilfried Helsen Dirk Pauwels Geoff
Dische Bianchini Don Fabio Tommaso Savio
Martinico Carole Smith-Milne Jens Skov Ib Staal
Axelsen Pauline van Zon Yvonne Jevtic' Timo E.
Toivonen Ann Albrecht Nils Enlund Erik P. Stevens
Alex de Boer Bjarne Nielsen Stig Hoffland Björn

Svedheim Hubert Schakenbos Benedicte Sterner Sari
Heikkilä John Stephens Olli Petramo José Eduardo
Carragosa Wim Groeneveld Jesper Clement Chris
Harding Sakari Koivula Kjell Winge Geoff Hayward
Tom E. Johansen Marina den Hartog Terje Stafseng
Barrie Linford Luis M. Camarinha-Matos Jens
Porsgaard Nielsen Robert E. van Weldam Kirsti Næss
Stephanos Karydakis Gudbrandur Magnuson Erik
Georgii Dries Huisman Hannu Kuukkanen Pedro
Rebelo Richard Wahlund Ole Christensen Seija
Ristimäki Ib Staal Per Thorkildsen Ab Kools João
Oliveira Birgitta Wahlberg Hans J. Koning Chris
Ottander Allan Thal-Jantzen Horst Tillybs Jukka
Aalto Herman Goethals Jacob Molenaar Göran
Bryntse Erik Stensen Jukka Laitinen Brian Kennedy
Spyridon Nomikos Öyvin Rannem Barry Coleman
Peter Ollén Geert Sander Jackie Grant Alessandra
Zucca Lilita Zalkalns Rania Athanasoulia François
Ballesteros Henk van der Eem Rea Makridou Eivind
Winsløw

The Establishment

April 23, 1990 was a lovely day in Stockholm.

The weather was unusually warm, and the sailboat, which cast away from one of the city quays was also out of the ordinary.

On board the three-masted sailboat, which glided into the Stockholm archipelago, was the idea of a historic European co-operation within the education and training area of the graphic arts sector.

It all had begun quite precisely one year earlier, when the newly elected commission within the EC (European Community) of that time, had decided to take up negotiations concerning direct co-operation with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries in the area of education.

The negotiations resulted in the opportunity for EFTA countries to participate in the EC's two major education programmes – Comett and Erasmus – starting January 1, 1990.

In Sweden, an EFTA-country, a part of the industry could see a possibility of entering Europe with competence and development questions, mainly through the Comett programme, and the opportunities this offered for co-operation between companies and universities.

Lobby activities were started immediately in the graphic arts sector, in order to establish contacts with at least two EC countries. These contacts were necessary in order to allow the EFTA countries to participate in the different network and project possibilities offered by the Comett programme.

The EC countries Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany, were close at hand in the search for co-operation. Contacts were taken with the social partners.

The Netherlands responded to the offer.

Denmark adopted a wait-and-see attitude, and in Germany, an educational centre affiliated to the trade unions showed interest.

This sufficed.

The graphic arts sector in the EFTA country Sweden had the necessary connections in order to set off on a European sailing trip. During the next decade, dangerous waters would be navigated, stormy seas ridden out, and one and another shoal would be hit, resulting in serious shakes to the historical co-operation.

But more of this later.

The Swedes, Dutch, Norwegians, Finns and Germans

were now together sailing off into the Stockholm archipelago with the intent to shape the conditions for future co-operation in education. Among them were representatives for the social partners, both in their own roles and in the roles as speakers for the industry, as well as teachers and researchers from educational institutes and universities.

The discussions during the boat meeting were mainly about the first field of activity under the Comett program – European networks for co-operation between higher education and companies.

A few months previously, some of the group participants had already applied to Comett for the support of such a network in the education field of the graphic arts sector. A reply from Brussels was anticipated some time during the summer.

"However", as it is written in the minutes from the meeting on the boat, "it was felt necessary to start discussions on the future life of the network for the simple reason that the training demands in the graphic industry were recognised as very pressing and that these demands should no doubt best be solved by new and trans-frontier actions, such as has been foreseen in the Comett programme."

A specialist on Comett from the Swedish university sector attending the boat meeting, warned against becoming overly optimistic. A network already

existed in England, which in the eyes of Brussels was seen to represent the entire graphic arts sector. The CITE-network (Centre for International Technology and Education) received Comett support.

Furthermore, Comett resources were limited, the struggle to achieve network status was very tough and it was recommended at the meeting that the formation of a network both with and without financial support from Brussels be examined. If the application were to be turned down, then one could always return with a new application in January 1992.

In the discussions that followed, a number of participants testified to the absolute necessity for international co-operation in the future. An agreement was soon reached to start a network, irrespective of how the process for choosing future networks developed in Brussels.

The unique pre-conditions were already there: "The integrated participation of both employers' and employees' organisation together with universities and enterprises".

Thus when the three-masted sailboat returned from the archipelago, it now carried in its hold the excellent pre-conditions for the launch of a competence network within the European graphic arts sector.

A decision was taken to hold a kick-off conference that same year in the middle of September, in the Netherlands. Now – after setting foot ashore – the preparations for the conference could be taken up. The goal was to finalise “proposals for statutes and rules of procedure for the network; proposals for budget ... for composition of a network board; proposals for director and staff and proposals for a work plan for budget year 1990/91”.

The preparations included the work to identify project areas, to form a member policy and to build the foundations for future information activities.

Everybody was very enthusiastic.

Later that year at an employers' meeting in Iceland, the Danes were persuaded to join in. And preparations continued as planned – in spite of the fact that during the on-going process, Brussels announced that it had turned down the application for network support from the Comett programme.

The Launching

The kick-off conference in Amsterdam began on September 17 with a day long presentation of the network concept. The starting point was a 7-page working document, where the arguments for the conception of the network, among others, were as follows:

- The developments in technology, organisations and competence require new, expensive pedagogical products. By working together, we can keep costs down.
- A widespread need for the international exchange of information and experience concerning courses and educational materials.
- Greater possibilities for the European graphic arts industry to compete with other markets depend upon how we work together in managing skills development.

This was all that the meeting needed.

The next day the following was announced: "We propose on the basis of the points listed that a decision is taken to start the EGIN network as from 1st of October, 1990".

EGIN – European Graphic Industries Competence Network was born.

Now only one hurdle remained – to compose a board with representatives from the social partners of the interested countries. The serious work could begin only when such a board had been set up, and only when it had approved of the network proposal.

There wasn't much time left – immediately after the new year a new application period for project support from the Comett programme was impending with a January deadline.

Founding Fathers

The central social partners in five countries had chosen their representatives in EGIN: Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In the history of EGIN, these representatives have thereafter been called the "Founding Fathers".

A certain experience in international co-operation already existed. For many years, the Nordic countries already had mutual interests in the Nordic Administrative Committee, which among other things treated issues on skills development and teaching materials; the Dutch had experience from various EC projects.

In spite of this, no one could foresee the time and efforts necessary in order to keep the network going over the next 10-year period.

A little over a month after the kick-off, the first board meeting was held in Stockholm. It was November 3, and the newly born EGIN network was formally christened.

Now the work began for real.

The board elected an administrative committee which was assigned to take the necessary steps in order for the network to be fully operative starting January 1991. A Project Director was appointed, with the office in Stockholm.

Before the next meeting in February 1991, the newly elected management was asked to produce a workable proposal for the EGIN charter.

Activity Plan

The board also approved of the activity plan which was discussed at the kick-off meeting in Amsterdam, some few months earlier. This meant, among other things, comprehensive work in the creation of project proposals to Comett, the recruitment of an extensive number of new members to the network, as well as the analysis and the initiation of discussions surrounding the need of competence development within the European graphic arts industry.

And furthermore:

- A renewed attempt to gain the status of a network within Comett
- Arrange teacher and student exchanges
- Establish a data bank for training arrangements and teaching materials.
- Make a list of courses and course materials appropriate for "Europeanisation"

- Finding competence standards between co-operating countries
- Etc.
- Etc...

As can be seen, ambitions were high. Management was given three years to attain not only the above, but in addition, even more – on condition, that the board did not decide to wind up EGIN after the first trial year.

Founding Document

During the larger part of 1991, EGIN management made a concentrated effort to formulate the founding document of the newly established network. As a result of this exertion, the EGIN foundation was established on January 10, 1992 with a seat in Amsterdam.

EGIN was then the abbreviated form for European Graphic Industries Competence Network. More than three years later – due to the galloping pace of technological development – the same acronym was expanded to stand for the current European Graphic/Media Industry Network.

The articles of association explain the goals and purpose of EGIN as follows:

The overall aim of the EGIN Network is to support

the graphic and reprographics industry across Europe. EGIN provides an infrastructure to support the development of :

- common competencies for vocational training in graphics and reprographics across Europe
- co-operation and collaboration between enterprises, training institutions, trade unions and employers organisations in this industrial sector within each member state
- trans European co-operation in the development and production of training materials to support small and medium-sized enterprises
- systematic training needs analysis to identify, agree and enact competency based training standards and procedures across member states.

Already in the articles of association, EGIN's non-political platform is emphasised with the statement: "EGIN is neutral with regard to employer and employee interests as well as with regard to various national interests."

Growing

During the process in which the articles of association were formulated, the membership structure had been discussed at three board meetings. If EGIN were to be

worthy of its name, new member countries had to be recruited.

A shift – but not more – in the direction towards EGIN had been felt in England and Belgium; France and Italy had been named as possible candidates.

But for some of the candidate countries, especially those in Southern Europe, EGIN's non-political platform put a stop for membership. For them, co-operation between social partners was an impossible thought.

Already in the preliminary recruitment discussions, a principle was established which has thereafter characterised EGIN throughout the years: the growth of the network will take place in a controlled form; new members are elected on condition that they have something to contribute to the function of the network.

In the preliminary preparations for a business plan for the network some years later, the following was written: "We want EGIN to grow in a controlled manner with only those countries which are situated within the geographical chosen field of activity, and which do agree with the method of working as well as goals of EGIN."

The undertakings during 1991 were so successful, that in its November meeting in 1991, the board

decided that EGIN should have an additional two years in order to put the network's right to exist on trial.

European Money

At the same time, the decision was made to once again apply for funding from Comett for continued network development. It was necessary to make this decision. An analysis had shown that in the future, economic support would be necessary for survival. Membership fees alone would not suffice if the current ambitions for development were to remain in force.

There was a lot of status involved in becoming a UETP within the Comett programme – and also a lot of money for operational support. UETP is short for University Enterprise Training Partnership with the purpose of building up regional or sectorial networks for co-operation between higher education and enterprises.

The competition was very tough. EGIN, as previously mentioned, had already experienced the rejection of one application.

In April 1992, when the final decision was approaching, the EGIN administration was told by "a well-informed source" that "EGIN is on the list of accepted applications".

Two weeks later, it turned out that the source was mistaken.

The future of EGIN was more uncertain than ever before.

The idea of winding up the network began to gain in strength.

In a last attempt to put EGIN on the list, the EGIN management wrote a personal letter to the COMETT Commissioner in Brussels.

In the letter, the unique idea behind EGIN was pointed out, and among other things, the major efforts were mentioned, which had been carried out up to now, in order to keep the network together; EGIN was standing firm in the graphic arts sector – all that was needed now was support in order to achieve a wider European dimension.

This helped.

Starting August 1, 1992, and three years ahead, EGIN would receive financial support from Comett in order to "build up a European network within the graphic arts industry for educational development and co-operation".

Not only the economic pre-conditions for an expansion had now been secured. By the middle of

the year, the EGIN administration had moved into an office in the Graphic Arts Centre in Tumba, just south of Stockholm. Two part-time assistants had been hired to help the Project Director, who in the meantime had been renamed General Secretary.

The success with the UETP application sparked the EGIN administration to take comprehensive initiatives for new project applications. Critics pointed out that sometimes it seemed as if the goal was to rake in as much money as possible, rather than to see to the need and quality of the project proposals which in a steady stream were being sent in to the Comett programme.

Project Work

During this period, there were two larger projects lasting over a number of years: Open Learning System, which had already begun, and PrintSim, which was waiting to begin.

OLS' purpose was to develop "education models for transmission over an electronic network"; PrintSim was to produce "a complete system for PC simulation technique for printing training".

In addition to funding for short courses about OLS and PrintSim, project applications for approximately twenty short courses were handed in during 1991-1992, with titles such as Visual Communication,

Qualified Bookbinding Techniques, Advanced Computer Usage, Data Communications and ISDN Transfer, Packaging Production and Productivity in the Communication Business in Europe.

The titles reveal that the EGIN projects were well in line with the state of the art of the technological developments of the times. It would take some years before the 'media' marked development would reach a breakthrough in project and course work.

However, more than a third of the project proposals were turned down by Comett.

Difficulties

Still, there were people in EGIN who worried that EGIN was becoming too dependent upon projects. This was made clear, among other things, when some members of the EGIN board expressed their dissatisfaction with the EGIN administration. They complained that there was an information gap, which resulted in that EGIN daily activities did not follow the intentions of the board, for example, insufficient priority was given to building a real network between EGIN's different members.

It was clear that measures must be taken in order to realign and tighten up the organisational structure.

In a document presented to the EGIN board in March

1992, a thorough analysis of the organisational difficulties facing EGIN was presented.

It was noted that "... the intended structure regarding functioning and decision making as put forward in the founders' document, is not operational yet."

It is not sufficient, the report went on, to continue working in a sort of ad hoc structure. If no change is forthcoming, then EGIN is at the risk of being wound up before the end of 1993.

It was also mentioned that a number of educational and research institutions in European countries in various alliances, were starting to prepare projects for special goals. If EGIN didn't have the resources to help with or to participate in these projects on an operational level, then there was a big risk that these projects would generate new networks, both small and large, next to EGIN, and weaken EGIN's position.

The conclusion was therefore clear: "A short term policy until 1993 and a vision for the period afterwards is indispensable. In this policy agreements can be made, measuring points can be concluded and guidelines can be given."

A few months later that year, a background paper for a new policy was presented. It mentioned that project

work was to be managed more strictly by "the network of contacts, which should be a bridge between the national sector organisations/schools and EGIN, when the concern is to actively produce development ideas and apply for support for these ideas within EGIN."

In other words, EGIN members should launch project ideas and development questions – the streaming and polishing should be done by EGIN.

The hope was that the information function would arise through the creation of the EGIN Co-ordinating Team. Every country was assigned the job of appointing the national co-ordinator (or contact person, as this position was later called). This person would be responsible for EGIN's activities and build a network between EGIN members in his or her country. Together with the other contact persons, they would prepare the decisions to be taken by the EGIN board. This function quickly disappeared, but would reappear years later as national EGIN meetings.

These and other statements in the policy paper indicate that at this time, the board was knowledgeable about the fact that the EGIN administration had had a heavy job load with a lot of responsibility.

But even though the board decided to increase the

volume of employee hours and change the organisation in order to diminish the workload, this measure did not help. In a letter to the board early in 1993, the General Secretary requested his resignation starting with the beginning of the next year.

The establishment phase of EGIN had ended - a new 3-year period could be planned.

New Organisation

During the initial work for a new network period, EGIN management had realised that not all EGIN members were prepared to agree upon a permanent status of the network.

It was true that EGIN had reached its goal to "become the only 'printing' network in Europe recognised by the European Commission", as it is written in a pre-study of the new operating period. But at the same time, the conclusion is reached that "...in general it can also be assumed that the final contents and implementations of the realised goal has not met the expectations or hopes of the EGIN partners."

Now changes were to take place:

"Priority is given to actually realising a network of information!"

In this way the networkers were put into focus for the first time in the history of EGIN.

During the first three years, about thirty members had passed through EGIN: companies, university institutions, educational and research institutes. Some were temporary, passive, guests, and quite often, only those members who were participants in courses and projects were active and interested in EGIN as such.

A list was made before the start of the new EGIN period. On it were 20 loyal members from the original founding countries, to which Iceland also had joined up now.

One of the main points for the new EGIN was to expand – "We need more founders and members!" the working document exclaimed. And both new and old members would be cared for differently than before.

EGIN's new organisational plan was formally accepted at a meeting in Oslo in October. Previously, all board countries had unanimously expressed themselves willing to participate in one additional EGIN period up to and including the end of 1995.

The Oslo meeting also passed the decision that the EGIN office would continue to be located in Sweden, but that the administrative apparatus would be diminished – from two full-time jobs, to one full-time, and one-part time job, to be divided amongst three persons: the General Secretary, which was renamed

Secretary/Treasurer, one working Chairman, and an assistant.

The expression was coined: "EGIN at a low-level".

The new EGIN organisation pivoted around the three sub-networks. These were Research, Education and Human Relations. In the first new and revised Newsletter, which was a part of the new information flow, their operations are described in the following way:

"EGIN works with three sub-networks ... Their members not only release and receive information about their area. A very important assignment is also to apply pressure against the central EGIN administration in order to initiate new activities such as projects, courses and seminars.

In this way EGIN is hoping to initiate interaction within the network – a dynamic exchange where the individual EGIN members play an important and prominent role."

Information System

With this EGIN management demonstrated that it had learned a lesson from the first operative period, namely that information is the most important resource in a network, for which everyone in the network must take on responsibility.

A network with impaired information flows is a network without structure and therefore cannot function since information-based organisations do not tolerate lengthy interruptions in communications. And it is through communication that new information and new knowledge is created.

It was therefore very important that in the new EGIN, activities were focused on bringing about a continual flow of information between all parts of the network.

The results were, among other things, a very ambitious information system, with detailed indications, how, where, and when information would pass through the network organisation.

This worked for a while due to the interest aroused by the innovation in itself. Nevertheless, in due time, the expectations placed on the high frequency of the information exchange led to the result that many of the system's information sources dried up.

There was simply not so much to inform about which would suffice for quarterly reports from EGIN's founding countries or from the three sub-networks; some years later, the Newsletter reduced its annual publication runs from six to four issues per year.

Currently, from the information system, the Newsletter exists at present, as well as the monthly reports from the EGIN administration to the board

and members. But in step with the reduction of the intended information system, another value took over as a worthy replacement in the EGIN community: the personal meetings of the individuals behind EGIN's education organisations, research institutes, trade unions and employers' federations.

It was here in this interaction, that the almost mythological "EGIN spirit" was established.

But more about this further on.

Marketing

Back to 1994, a year, where EGIN activities were focused upon gaining a breakthrough for the new organisation, but also to market the network outside of the circles of believers, with the intention to gain new members and new member countries.

In June, the "New EGIN" was introduced all over Europe by a specially prepared information brochure and by sending press releases to over 200 newspapers and graphic arts magazines in thirteen languages.

The results were apparent soon enough.

In the first issues of the revised Newsletter, eight new membership applications were registered from six countries. The members came exclusively from EGIN's original countries, which was in line with the

current rules, since members could not be recruited from non-EGIN countries.

In order to increase the number of members, more countries had to be recruited to join the board. Germany, England, Belgium and France became objects for the recruitment procedures of the EGIN board - nevertheless with the result of polite interest in the strange invitation to begin co-operation among antagonists on the labour market.

However, the rule of "members only from member countries" was soon changed, and by the end of 1996, the educational organisations from Ireland, Belgium, England and Portugal had entered into the network community.

During this period, the member list of EGIN was also revised.

Up to this point in time, a number of graphic arts companies were among the EGIN members. The Finnish companies were in a majority, and amongst them, the discussion arose what use they had of being EGIN members. As a result of the discussions and after a meeting between the concerned parties, the EGIN board decided that "EGIN only has founders and members as participants in the network; indirectly all companies are members via their national employers' association".

EGIN and the Finnish companies parted ways under

mutual agreement and the empty seats in the EGIN ranks after the departure of the companies was soon filled by new members from the education and research sectors.

But now it was late 1994.

The decision was taken to move the office to central Stockholm, and to make the use of the current buzz-word of the day in the new logo, "European Graphic/Media Industry Network".

EGIN had gained a new organisation. EGIN had presented itself all over Europe and had received a satisfactory response: in the expanse between Hungary in the east and Ireland in the west, potential EGIN countries and EGIN members showed up; Intergraf and EGF – the social partners' central European organisations – made contact in order to get information and discuss co-operation, and in Brussels, the Comett office revealed that it used the EGIN structure as a model for its new education programme Leonardo.

It was of utmost importance now to be stable and secure, but at the same time demonstrate a go-ahead spirit.

Mission Statement

At an executive committee meeting in November, discussions were carried on about a strategy for the

future of EGIN. In the light of the recent success for the new EGIN, the decision was taken that the network would continue to exist even after 1996, which was the next deadline for those EGIN countries which wanted to resign from co-operation.

And even if the EGIN network were to lose financial support from European sources, then operations would go on; it was once again "EGIN at a low level" with the infrastructure remaining unchanged.

The goal was to formulate a document "which will provide an answer to the question what position EGIN would like to hold at the beginning of the next century".

At the end of 1995, the document "Mission Statement – EGIN in the Year 2000" was published, where it was said that "the network has become a real network" and that "EGIN regards itself as a carrier for the members to implement their wishes and demands".

What was being said here, was the result of one of the main goals of the new organisation: the members in focus.

The mission statement also sets up a new dimension for EGIN activities. Under headings such as "Products", "Commercial Activities" and "Services" it predicts that in the future, the production, marketing, and sales of products from EGIN projects and of

EGIN member know-how and expert knowledge, will take place.

Some of this would eventually come true, but the developments during the following years up to the next decade would show that much of the expected "commercialisation of EGIN" did not take place.

Otherwise, a quite impressive list of short courses, seminars and projects had taken place in EGIN so far. Headings such as Packaging Logistics and Human Computer Interaction, CIM in the Printing Industry, Introduction to Quality in Printing-ISO 9000 and Advanced Techniques in Small Offset Printing can attest to this.

In addition, over 50 student work placements abroad had been arranged.

A summary of the first five years of EGIN, as it appeared in the Newsletter in 1995, wasn't all that far off the mark:

"Each new co-operative project undertaken in EGIN has uncovered new problems, but also shown new possibilities for improvement and skills development ... it meets the needs of the industry."

Multimedia

During the previous year, new Comett funding had been allocated to a five-part course package in multimedia, which had given EGIN the possibility to

step "into the world of digital publishing". After the successful multimedia course, it was reported that "the results and experiences of this project are being distributed in a natural manner to EGIN member organisations in several European countries."

This was the best proof that the network was beginning to work as originally intended: information, experience exchange and the support in the daily activities over national boundaries was no longer unusual for EGIN members.

Late in autumn 1995, the EGIN countries arranged a seminar, which additionally emphasised EGIN's current and expected significance as a platform for international co-operation. At the seminar, the needs of "future requirements for training in the graphic arts industry in Europe" were discussed.

Publishing

However, many of EGIN's courses and teaching materials could not be commercialised. The prospects were much brighter for the PrintSim products, which were ready for the market some time before the end of 1995.

At the beginning of EGIN's history, the attempt had been made to legitimise the existence of the network using the argument about future business possibilities; it was natural that the hunt for a publisher began almost immediately.

At an early stage EGIN had contacts with Pira International, a leading London publisher in the paper, printing, packaging and publishing industry. In 1994, both parties signed a contract concerning the setting up of an EGIN Publishing unit within Pira, which would consist of a publisher, and production and marketing personnel.

It was not expected that Pira would publish products in all EGIN languages. In every country there would be a publisher (sub-contractor) who had the right to publish EGIN/Pira products in their own language. The term 'Publishers' network' was born.

Not quite unexpectedly, it was the PrintSim products which attracted Pira's interest. A major marketing initiative, together with reputable contacts in the educational area of the graphic arts/media sector, resulted in that Pira's PrintSim sales got off to a good start at the turn of the year 1995/96.

Naturally, it helped that PrintSim at this time, was elected by the EU Commission as one of the 100 most important educational projects in Europe.

Pira was also the co-organiser of the EGIN Annual Conference, which in 1996 was arranged in London. This was a break through for the future yearly tradition for EGIN members: the conference as a natural meeting place for the exchange of experience and know-how and for discussions about networking.

Digital EGIN

The London conference resulted in an important decision, that was to be of great importance for the continued operation of the network. "Digital EGIN" - an electronic network was announced as the new information system in the EGIN network.

"A future EGIN, by combining past experiences with current modern technology, must be able to establish tighter co-operation and interactivity between members, improve the flow of information, increase efficiency and responsibility and improve the feeling of the European dimension".

Immediately after the conference, the EGIN administration was given the assignment to write a document based upon the idea of Digital EGIN, in the next few weeks.

At this time EGIN had an e-mail address and a functional web page. In addition, the Institute for the Graphics Industries in Oslo, as it was known then, had been assigned by EGIN to construct a database on educational information with relevance to the graphical industries.

All this, and much more would now be fused together to become a part of Digital EGIN.

The EGIN administration's document concerning the

new technology-based information system was very ambitious and to a large extent based upon an exaggerated belief in the galloping development in technology – and on human will and capacity to use the technology.

"Digital EGIN, consisting of linked web pages, will provide information about most aspects of the graphic arts/media industry", the document explains.

One of the main attractions of the EGIN homepage would be the "EGIN Where-House", which was to function as the hub of Digital EGIN. The Where-House would consist of eight storeys with different aspects of EGIN information; every storey would, in addition, have some type of access key.

But during the years following the Digital EGIN concept, and in line with the further development of technology, Digital EGIN was boiled down to a broth, consisting of only the most useful parts – the home page and e-mail.

The work on Digital EGIN also resulted in new board discussions concerning the EGIN organisation.

Reorganisation

At first, it was noted at the London conference that the different working groups from the three sub-networks Research, Education/Training and Human Relations had reached almost the same conclusions in

the discussion surrounding education and development – why split up forces?

And since the flow of information within and between the sub-networks currently wasn't much more than a very small trickle, and the hope for renewal in this connection was in the Digital EGIN concept, the board decided to wind up the three sub-networks.

And more about the organisation was to be brought up.

Some months after the London conference, the EGIN board received the following letter containing a proposal from Iceland, named "The Future of EGIN on Low Level".

The letter went straight to the point: "It must be said that EGIN has not become a real network and all attempts to make it a graphic industry network in all European countries has failed".

Iceland wanted to shut down the EGIN office and replace it with links to project and discussion groups. Instead of a Newsletter, all information would be distributed via internet and written by those who felt inspired. There would be no restrictions for EGIN membership.

Iceland's letter threw light on the strategy document

"Mission Statement – EGIN in the Year 2000" and demonstrated that the document was a bad collection of arguments for a discussion concerning EGIN's existence and future destiny. The document was too vague and unclear and left too many open ends.

At the same time, the EGIN board admitted that there was a need to discuss the future of the EGIN network once again. As background material, the EGIN office was given the assignment to write a proposition for a 5-year plan for the continued operation of the network.

Business Plan

Now one was half-way into 1996.

Eighteen months later, following a survey of board countries and after constant revisions and different versions under different headings, there appeared a proposal for an "EGIN Business Plan".

During the work process, the following conclusions were reached:

- EGIN now had become a 'value for money' members' network, to primarily reduce duplication of effort, maximise resources and to some extent access to EU funding.
- EGIN has been extremely effective in dealing

with this development, its membership has grown year by year, and EGIN is now a highly valued and professional organisation.

- The work of EGIN has influenced the graphic arts/media industry in areas of strategic importance in education and training, such as multimedia, modern information/communications technology and the development of digital simulations.
- By different ways, via projects and other co-operative arrangements, EGIN will support and stimulate research with the aim to develop modern education and training products as well as methods to support basic and further education for future and present employees.
- EGIN will grow in a controlled manner. Membership will be accepted only from countries situated within a chosen field of activity, which agree with the EGIN method of working and with the goals of EGIN.

EGIN's new five-year plan was accepted at the EGIN Annual Conference in Lisbon, 1998.

New Members

The choice of Portugal as the conference venue was due to EGIN's attempts to enrol network members

from Southern Europe. During the preliminary discussions of the new five-year plan, one constantly returned to the question of new members. Among other things, one was very well aware that the Northern European dominance in the network had to be broken, if one wanted claim that EGIN were a true European network.

At that time, both of England's social partners had accepted EGIN's non-political platform and taken a place on the EGIN board in a historical co-operation. The German trade union had shown its interest by requesting information about the pre-conditions for membership, and there were indications that Belgium and Austria were also interested in participating in the network.

Therefore with the intent to recruit countries from southern Europe, the annual board meetings and the annual conferences were located in this region. Portugal was the first country to register its interest and in Greece, the employers' organisation decided to apply for membership on the EGIN board.

During the late 1990's, new members joined from the education and training organisations in Italy, Portugal and Greece.

The constantly increasing number of members and member countries had certain significance for the survival of the EGIN network for over five years after

the Comett programme and its support to the network had ended. The EU's new education program – Leonardo – did not provide any such similar support – neither did it give funding for short courses or seminars, which where the major projects given top priority by EGIN.

But EGIN had proved that it could live up to the promise given in 1994, that the network would continue, irregardless of economic support from European sources.

Leonardo

In the first round of Leonardo applications, EGIN succeeded in getting funds for a successor to PrintSim, PostPressSim - a Computer Aided Training System for Bookbinding, Finishing and Mailing Areas.

Over the next years, the EGIN conference recommended a number of pilot projects which have received economic support from the Leonardo programmes, such as EGEMS - European Graphic/Media Module Production Support System; ADEPT - Advertising in Electronic Publishing; COMES - Coaching Human Resources for Continuous Organisation Learning; Recycling - Competence Development in the recycling Area; Custom DP – Creating Training Materials for Digital Printing.

During EGIN's 10 years of operations, the network has succeeded in gaining over 3.5 million euros from the European Union in support for development and education initiatives in the graphic arts/media sector.

Just as was predicted, nothing much resulted from the business activities. Certain success has been achieved in Pira's sales of PrintSim products. A sales list from late 1997 shows that sales have taken place in a number of EGIN countries, and in the USA, Africa and India.

Plans for the reorganisation of Pira's publishing activities resulted inthat the interest for co-operating with EGIN slowly diminished at Pira. At the same time, the EGIN board gave up the idea of forming a publishers' network. For a long time, it was known that there were much too few publishers in EGIN countries who were operating in the graphic arts/media sector.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts to link up Pira closer to the activities of the EGIN board, both parties gave up and annulled the contract on the EGIN Publishing Unit within Pira.

The EGIN Spirit

It was now in the year 2000 and more delegates than ever before had gathered to celebrate EGIN's 10-year jubilee at the Annual Conference in Florence.

Each and every delegate had taken on the responsibility for the ten years of network development and all had contributed to the special EGIN spirit, which has been so tangibly present at the conferences during the recent years.

Each and every delegate had experienced how to master the social and cultural difference between the EGIN countries and all had learned to overlook the language difficulties, which during the early EGIN years, had created unnecessary misunderstandings and put a stop to deeper discussions.

They all spoke about EGIN as a natural, non-political centre for contacts between people, exchange of information and project creation.

The sentiments were expressed in that order and showed that a change in perspective concerning the activities of EGIN had taken place.

During the early years, EGIN was mainly a project-management organisation - the dominating characteristic in operations was to create projects which would get EU support and which would contribute to the continued existence of the network.

Many of the convulsions which struck EGIN during the ten years of operation were a result of a slow motion from project management activities towards a culture where meetings between people were seen to be the best pre-conditions for development.

Two years earlier the EGIN board had once again taken up the old and never fully exploited idea of national co-ordinators that would attend to EGIN's problems on a national level. The results of the discussions were that the EGIN countries were recommended to arrange national EGIN meetings on a yearly basis with their members in order to discuss different aspects of networking.

Many of the national meetings during the final millenium years proposed more organised EGIN meetings in different forms, instead of increased investments in projects. As a result of these wishes, the EGIN board made the decision to increase the frequency of the seminars it would organise.

Thereafter, the biannual seminars, arranged by EGIN, have had more of a human, rather than technological motto. Teachers at graphic/media education institutes have held the first seminar of three, during the past three years, and the young people of Europe have found their way into EGIN's consciousness via two seminars about the important art of recruitment for the graphic/media sector's future.

And now it is 2001, and the EGIN conference in Madrid has just begun...