

FOCUS ON:

# Information and Communication



If you were one of the billions who watched the recent Beijing Olympic Games on television, you might have been impressed by how quickly the results became available. The games represent an enormous IT task—the world’s largest ever sport-related IT contract. IT at this Olympics and future games in 2010 (Vancouver) and 2012 (London) is the responsibility of Atos Origin, a Franco-Dutch company.

Atos Origin is a leading international IT services provider. As the Worldwide IT Partner for the Olympic Games and Top sponsor, Atos Origin integrates, manages and secures the vast IT system that relays results, events and athlete information to spectators and media around the world. At the Beijing Olympics, Atos Origin orchestrated this information flow from

seven cities and more than 70 venues, covering 28 sports and 302 events.

## Wired to the max

The Netherlands is one of the most “wired” countries in the world, resulting from years of investment in high-speed Internet, cable, and digital communications. Additionally, the country has rapidly adopted innovative computer and mobile phone technologies. At 28.8 broadband connections per 100 inhabitants, the Netherlands is second only to Denmark in worldwide broadband penetration.

For those successful international enterprises seeking to use new technology to expand, streamline, or improve their competitiveness, the Netherlands offers a favorable tax climate, an excellent labor relations record, a highly skilled work-

force, and a wealth of high-quality, internet-ready business accommodation.

Some 5,500 foreign companies operate in the Netherlands, among them IT companies such as Acer Computer, BenQ, Blast Radius, Cisco Systems, Fujitsu, HP, IBM, SIntel, Google, Microsoft, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, Tata Consulting Services and Verizon. About 26,000 companies take part in various ICT-related activities, generating about \$43 billion or 5.5% of GDP. ICT represents a substantial industry, creating employment for 250,000 people or 3.5% of the total workforce.

Additionally, ICT is a vital enabler of other industries. In Europe, for example, it’s responsible for 25% of GDP growth, and has contributed to a 40% gain in productivity. The Netherlands has seen a similar effect. The world-class position the Netherlands

# Technology (ICT)

enjoys in industries such as logistics, food technology, maritime construction, and the creative sector has largely resulted from its expertise in ICT.

In May 2010, the 17th World Congress on IT (WCIT) of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) will be held in Amsterdam. The members of WITSA represent more than 90% of the global ICT market, which makes the WCIT the most prominent event of its kind. The Dutch ICT sector is extremely proud to be hosting the WCIT, and views the honor as a confirmation of the Netherlands' international position.

## Innovative products and services

ICT-Office is the sector association for over 450 Dutch IT, telecommunications, office and Internet companies. According to Sylvia Roelofs, General Manager ICT-Office, the main strength of the Dutch ICT sector lies in its ability to turn existing technologies into innovative products and services that sell well. "If you can do that," she says, "then you possess a skill that will allow you to be successful anywhere in the world."

Various examples confirm this assertion:

- Wristbands with RFID chips are a Dutch development. Visitors to amusement parks can use them to enter rides and purchase food and drinks without having to pay in cash each time, because all purchases are recorded by the wristband.
- The Dutch have developed a disaster early-warning system for dikes. These dikes have been keeping the parts of the Netherlands that are below sea level dry for around a thousand years.

Various countries are undertaking specific projects based on this system.

## Energy and recycling

The Dutch ICT sector practices environmentally friendly business practices. It participates in ICT Environment, an organization that facilitates collecting and processing used ICT equipment. As a result 220 million pounds of ICT waste has already been processed in what is now an almost fully closed system. And 97% of the waste turns up in the manufacture of new products. ICT Environment takes care of the day-to-day management of this logistics system, which was established in 1999 in response to the increasing environmental demands imposed on ICT companies by the Netherlands government.

In addition, various Dutch knowledge institutions have studied the possible role of the ICT sector in energy conservation. These investigations concluded that effective use of ICT could enable households, offices, and the retail trade to save at least 10% in energy without suffering any inconvenience. Possible measures include smart software that regulates heating in homes and offices according to user



habits and weather forecasts, as well as more energy-efficient hardware. ICT can manage a building's energy consumption.

The continued development of video conferencing will also improve conservation. The quality of video conferencing is now so high that it represents a serious alternative to flying or driving to meetings.

*Editor's Note: The Agency for International Business and Cooperation (EVD)'s May 2008 publication, Made in Holland - ICT, was used as a source for this article.*

