

**Website Evaluation ‘Geld Naar Huis’:
User-Friendliness, Effectiveness, and Financial Sustainability**

Final Report

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Summary

The following report details an evaluation of the Dutch remittance service comparison website ‘Geld Naar Huis’ (<http://geldnaarhuis.nl/>). The evaluation was carried out at the behest of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs between June and October of 2010.

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was created to increase transparency within the Dutch remittance market by providing an overview of remittance transfer operators offering services to select countries. By increasing transparency within the market, the envisioned consequences included increased competition among providers, decreased transfer costs, an improved price-quality ratio, higher use of formal remittance channels, and better-informed remittance senders. To achieve these goals the website supplies information on the providers operating within specific corridors and allows users to evaluate and compare those providers’ services against several criteria, such as service speed and cost.

The website was evaluated through several dimensions: history and development of the website, current management and costs of the website, services offered by the website, usage and user-friendliness of the website, effectiveness of the website, objectives of the website, and financial sustainability of the website. Through assessment of features of the website within these themes, the general conclusion is that the degree to which the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has been successful in meeting its inception objectives is limited.

‘Geld Naar Huis’ has experienced limited usage by members of its target audience, and its lacking visibility has resulted in meager impacts on migrants’ understanding of the Dutch remittance market and operators functioning within it. This is mostly due to a lack of financial stability and continuity of the website. From discussions with migrants and financial service providers alike, it has become clear that the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has great potential to bring transparency to the Dutch remittance market, but its capacity to do so largely rests on increasing its visibility. While it is not definitively clear what role the website has had in increasing competition among providers and thus reducing transfer costs, it can be stated with some certainty that the website has not had a significant impact on the behavior of remittance transfer operators, especially as engagement with banks and money transfer operators (MTOs) has been limited at best. The website has not inspired much cooperation with remittance transfer providers, and the limited exchange between the website and providers constrains its capacity to affect the remittance market.

To help the website better achieve its objectives, several improvements could be made to the management of the website, the website’s services and features, and the website’s financial situation. In terms of management of the website, improvements could include increasing visibility of the website among potential users, better embedding the website into the other activities of its operator IntEnt, and formulating a clear vision and action plan for the future. In terms of the website’s services and features, suggestions for improvements include ensuring more up-to-date and accurate information (via, for instance, automatic information retrieval protocols and mystery shopping exercises), providing users with more information on financial news and services linked to remittances, and more selection criteria for use in assessing service providers with the comparison calculator. The website’s financial situation could be improved by the formulation of a clear business model that addresses sources of funding and sustainability, streamlining of the information retrieval process to reduce personnel costs, and better linkages with other financial initiatives and campaigns. In addition, some lessons can be learned from other website initiatives, which are explained in depth in the report.

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Contents

Summary	3
Acknowledgements	4
About the authors	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Approach and Methodology	9
2.1 Approach.....	9
2.2 Methodology	10
3. Development of the Website: An Historic Overview	12
3.1 History of ‘Geld Naar Huis’	12
3.2 Costs of creation and maintenance of ‘Geld Naar Huis’	13
3.3 Initial management of ‘Geld Naar Huis’	13
3.4 Promotion of the website	14
3.5 Reporting on the website	14
4. ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Today: Management, Costs, and Funding	16
4.1 Current management of the website	16
4.2 Current management activities	16
4.3 Current financial situation of ‘Geld Naar Huis’	16
5. Services Offered by ‘Geld Naar Huis’	17
5.1 Information and services provided on the website	17
5.2 Countries represented on the website	18
5.3 The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ newsletter	18
6. Users of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website: Numbers and Profiles	20
6.1 Visitors of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website.....	20
6.2 Country information consulted on the website	20
6.3 Languages used for the calculation module.....	21
6.4 References to the website.....	21
7. User-Friendliness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website	23
7.1 General user-friendliness: A subjective evaluation	23
7.2 User-friendliness: Voices from the users	24
7.2 Perceptions on information provided.....	25
7.3 Subscription to the newsletter.....	26
7.4 Suggested improvements by the users of ‘Geld Naar Huis’	26
8. Efficiency of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website	27
8.1 Banks and MTOs on the website	27
8.2 Cooperation with banks and MTOs: IntEnt’s point of view.....	27
8.3 Cooperation with banks and MTOs: the point of view of service providers	28
8.4 Knowledge sharing with other websites	29
9. Effectiveness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website	31
9.1 Initial objectives.....	31
9.2 Market transparency.....	31
9.3 Price-quality ratio of money transfers.....	32
10. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website in Comparison	34
10.1 European Country Websites	34
10.1.1 Website Scope and Coverage.....	35
10.1.2 Website Language.....	35
10.1.3 User Friendliness	36
10.1.4 Other European-based Websites	37

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

10.2 International Remittance Comparison Websites.....	37
10.2.1 World Bank Remittances Prices Worldwide	38
10.2.1 Mondato	39
10.2.3 ‘Send Money Home’	40
11. Financial Sustainability	42
11.1 Initial plan for financial sustainability	42
11.2 Potential costs of the website	42
11.3 Options for financial sustainability	43
12. The Way Forward: Challenges and Recommendations.....	48
12.1 Recommendations.....	48
12.2 Proposed action plan	51
13. Conclusion	53
13. References	54
Appendix 1: Electronic Survey (English Version)	55
Appendix 2: Historic overview ‘Geld Naar Huis’	60
Appendix 3: Interview guide round table.....	61
Appendix 4: Focus group guide	61
Appendix 5: Websites comparison	62

1. Introduction

This report provides an evaluation of the website www.geldnaarhuis.nl in response to a request issued by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Remittances, the money that migrants send back to their home countries, have gained increasing importance in the international debate over the last decade due to their potential to alleviate poverty and stimulate development. At the same time, the way remittances are sent, also called remittance ‘channels’, has become the subject of debate. The formalization of remittance channels has recently faced increased policy pressure, yet the role of informal remittance transfer channels has remained significant. Globally, a large share of remittances is still transferred through various informal channels instead of through the banking system or established money transfer operators. Remittances sent through formal channels are believed to have a higher development potential due to a greater multiplier effects, greater market transparency, more security in the remittances market, and greater development of the financial sector in less developed areas. This has led to much stimulation and innovation in the market for remittance transfers with a greater emphasis on formal channels.

The Netherlands is a diverse, multi-cultural society with many people originating from other countries. Approximately 16 percent of the Dutch population is a first or second generation migrant, and a large amount of remittances are sent every year from the Netherlands to the families and friends of migrants abroad. In 2006 the Dutch National Bank (DNB) recorded total workers' remittances leaving the Netherlands at €798 million (DNB, 2009). This is only the official remittances figure, and the actual remittance rate is conceivably higher. Due to the large flows of remittances from the Netherlands and their high development potential, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a keen interest in the topic, wishing to make the market for remittances more transparent and at a lower cost for remittance senders. This explicit goal is one of the main reasons for the inception of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website that is currently managed by the Dutch non-governmental organization IntEnt.

IntEnt was founded in 1996, and the NGOs main activities focus on stimulating and supporting migrants in the Netherlands to engage in entrepreneurship in their countries of origin or home countries. In 2006, ten years after IntEnt’s foundation, IntEnt launched the first version of www.geldnaarhuis.nl, a website that provides migrants in the Netherlands the opportunity to compare prices of money transfers to their family or friends in their home countries. By creating this website, IntEnt followed the successful example of other European countries, such as the United Kingdom with their www.sendmoneyhome.org, and the World Bank’s Remittances Prices Worldwide website.

The goal of the website was to enhance transparency in the Dutch remittances market to create competition among money transfer operators and to facilitate the development of fast and reliable money transfers methods. The logic governing the development of the website predicts that transparency in the market would lead to lower prices and a better price-quality ratio for people who make money transfers, which would enhance the contribution that migrants can make in their home countries.

Today, four years after the first launch of the website, this evaluation looks at the extent to which the website has attained these goals. The evaluation focuses first of all on issues from the migrants’ point of view, such as the services the website offers and the user-friendliness of the website, to see if the style and content of the website conforms to the wishes of the people that regularly make money transfers. Second, the effectiveness of the website, in terms of market transparency, is researched. Third, the cooperation with banks and money transfer operators and the efficiency of the website’s management, is analyzed. Finally, advice will be

given on the financial sustainability of the website as a result of comparisons made between the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website and other money transfer comparison websites.

The rest of this report is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, the approach and methodology used in this evaluation are discussed. Chapter 3 provides a historic overview of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, including its costs and management, whereas in the fourth chapter the focus shifts to the current situation of the website. Chapters 5, 6, and 7, introduce the services the website offers, the user-profiles of people who use the website, and a subjective assessment of the user-friendliness of the website. The effectiveness of the website, the extent to which the website has reached its initial goals, and the financial sustainability of the website are discussed in Chapters 8, 9, and 10, respectively. Finally, Chapter 11 offers a comparison of www.geldnaarhuis.nl to other remittances comparison websites, Chapter 12 provides the recommendations of this report, and Chapter 13 the conclusions.

2. Approach and Methodology

2.1 Approach

The evaluation of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was carried out based on several underlying themes. These themes guided the analysis of the website for different aspects of the evaluation. The different themes are described in detail below.

1. *History and development of the website*

The aim for this theme was to create an overview of the history and development of the website. Focus was on the activities that were undertaken to create the website and how the process of creating and maintaining the website had proceeded. Issues such as the management of the website and the costs of creating and maintaining the website were also central to this theme. In addition, attention was paid to the way the development of the website was reported upon by IntEnt.

2. *Current management and costs of ‘Geld Naar Huis’*

In this theme the main focus was on the current management of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website. The questions guiding this part of the evaluation included: Who currently manages the website, and how effective is the current management of ‘Geld Naar Huis’, taking into consideration the website’s budgets?

3. *Services offered by ‘Geld Naar Huis’*

This theme provides a descriptive account of the services offered by the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website and a qualitative evaluation of these services, both independently as well as in comparison to other remittances-channels comparison websites.

4. *Usage and user-friendliness of the website*

As the migrants in the Netherlands play a large role in the foundation of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, this theme focused mainly on the individual experiences of migrants in using the website.

5. *Effectiveness of the website*

To assess the effectiveness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, an analysis was made of the cooperation between the website’s management and the different banks and money transfer operators in the Netherlands. In addition, the extent to which knowledge sharing takes place between ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and other remittances-channels comparison websites was researched. The effectiveness of the website is also explored through an assessment of the extent to which the website is successfully promoted and how the website keeps abreast of new developments in the remittances market.

6. *Objectives of ‘Geld Naar Huis’*

For this part of the evaluation, focus was on the extent to which the website has reached its initial goals. For example, has the website reached its goal of attracting a significant number of users? Have migrants in the Netherlands gained a better understanding of the various costs and methods of money transfers? Most importantly, has the website succeeded in making the remittance-sending market in the Netherlands more transparent by providing migrants an overview of the characteristics of different remittances channels for different countries? These questions were addressed in this part of the evaluation.

7. Sustainability of the website

In the sustainability theme of the evaluation, specific attention was paid to the future of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website in terms of funding and financial sustainability. Can the website, for example, operate without government funding? What are alternative options for funding? Can the website's independence be guaranteed with these different options for funding? Those were questions guiding the website evaluation for this theme. Within this theme, a comparison was also made between remittances-channels comparison websites of other countries and the 'Geld Naar Huis' website.

2.2 Methodology

The different themes underlying the 'Geld Naar Huis' website evaluation required different methodological approaches. Several research methods were applied to carry out the evaluation of the website, each of which is described in detail.

A. Desk research

To provide an overview of the history and development of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website, intensive desk research was carried out as a first step in the evaluation. This desk research involved creating an overview of the documents provided by IntEnt and the available literature on remittances-sending websites. The documents provided by IntEnt included the original project proposals, the calls for funding, and the different interim reports.

B. Qualitative interviews

Different in-depth interviews were conducted during the evaluation process. The interviewees included IntEnt staff members, former IntEnt staff members, staff from the Mondato international remittances comparison website (www.mondato.com), and staff from the World Bank working on the Remittances Prices Worldwide website (www.remittancesprices.worldbank.org).

C. Evaluation of 'Geld Naar Huis' website statistics

The statistics of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website were kindly provided by the 'Geld Naar Huis' management and their ICT specialists, and they provided insights into several aspects of the website such as the usage and the characteristics of users of the website over the past years.

D. Quantitative electronic survey

A short electronic survey was used to gain insight in the experiences and preferences of the visitors of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. This short survey (English version) is provided in the Appendix. The themes of the survey included frequency and method of money transfer, frequency of usage of the website, assessment of user-friendliness of the website, and effectiveness of the website. The survey was posted on the website as a pop-up, and users were kindly requested to fill in the survey. Amongst the participants a small prize was awarded. The survey was available to the participants in Dutch, English, and French. In total, 66 people filled in the online survey. The majority of the participants ($n = 61$) filled in the survey in Dutch. After cleaning of data, an additional 16 surveys were taken from the sample because the surveys were incomplete.

The total number of surveys used for the analyses is 50. This sample is neither representative for the Dutch migrant population nor representative of all 'Geld Naar Huis' users. The gender distribution is almost equal, with 24 men and 26 women. The average age of the participants was 34, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest being 50 years old. Most people had either vocational or pre-vocational secondary education ($n = 15$), which is comparable to Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs in the Dutch context, or vocational tertiary education ($n = 15$), which is comparable to Hoger Beroepsonderwijs in the Dutch context. See the Appendix for

further descriptive statistics of the results of the electronic survey.

E. Focus group discussions

To assess the users or potential users' perspective of the website, an informal focus group was conducted at the policy conference on circular migration held on September 24th 2010. This was an ideal venue to host a focus group, as many representatives from immigrant organizations and a large number of remittance senders (which are the target population of the website) were present. Seven people participated in the focus group including 1 Pilipino, 5 Kenyans, and 1 Ugandan. With this discussion we wanted to better understand the needs and wants of migrants with regard to the website as well as the knowledge and access they had to the website.

F. Round-the-table discussion

To assess the degree of cooperation that the 'Geld Naar Huis' website can inspire from providers, a round-the-table discussion was conducted among four individuals representing parts of the financial sector, from money transfer operators to the Dutch Association of Banks (Nederlands Vereniging Banken; NVB)¹. The 90-minute long session focused on the role the 'Geld Naar Huis' website can play in adding more value to the businesses of money transfer service providers, modifications that could be made to the website to increase its value for providers, and the role that money transfer providers can play in increasing the transparency of the remittance market. The guide used to steer the discussion is provided in the Appendix.

G. Qualitative evaluation of the website

The 'Geld Naar Huis' website was evaluated both from a user's perspective and through a comparative perspective in which the features of other European-based and internationally-oriented remittance comparison websites served as a baseline for evaluating the features of 'Geld Naar Huis'. This qualitative assessment was used primarily to uncover aspects of user-friendliness and elements of website success that would not be uncovered by any of the other data collection methods.

H. Data analysis of CBS statistics

Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands was used as background information for the website evaluation, and was retrieved from the online database Statline (www.statline.cbs.nl).

¹It should be noted that no representatives of banks agreed to participate despite attempts to engage them in the discussion. While two separate representatives of ABN AMRO initially agreed to participate, both withdrew just prior to the discussion.

3. Development of the Website: An Historic Overview

3.1 History of ‘Geld Naar Huis’

IntEnt was founded in 1996 in a joint effort by Facet BV, SEON Foundation, and Triodos Bank. The main financial supporters were the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation and HIVOS. The main goal of IntEnt is to stimulate entrepreneurship by migrants in their home countries across borders. Consequently, the main activity of IntEnt is to support migrants who have the desire to start a business in their country of origin. This business creation program initially focused on migrant groups from Surinam, Turkey, Morocco, and Ghana, but it has now expanded to include many other countries as well such as Curacao, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia.

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was launched by IntEnt in early 2006 and has been managed by IntEnt from this period. The creation of the website followed after a initial period of conception. Through its work in supporting and enabling migrants’ enterprises in their home countries, IntEnt accumulated a substantial amount of know-how on migration and development issues over the years.

IntEnt’s interest in private money transfers, or remittances, grew as they worked with migrants in other projects and realized the considerable amounts of money migrants often send to their home countries, some to support their family or friends, and others to start a business. As a result IntEnt started to broaden its knowledge on the way migrants generate these funds and, what channels migrants use to transfer these funds to their country of origin.

In addition to this accumulation of knowledge, IntEnt established both national and international contacts with people working in the field of migration and development. Every four years, for example, a conference is organized by IntEnt entitled ‘Internationalizing Entrepreneurship Education and Training’ in which migration and development issues are discussed. After contact with DFID on their successful website www.sendmoneyhome.org, IntEnt slowly embraced the idea of creating a comparative remittance website in the Netherlands.

After the initial phase in which the idea for the comparative remittance website arose, IntEnt, in a joint effort with NCDO (Nationale Commissie voor internationale samenwerking en Duurzame Ontwikkeling), commissioned the Dutch Consumer Union (Nederlandse Consumentenbond) to write a report on remittances and remittances channels in the Netherlands. This report, entitled ‘Goed Geld Overmaken’ was published in October 2005 and focused specifically on different remittances channels available for remitting to different countries, the usage of these different channels by migrants in the Netherlands, and the perceptions of migrants in the Netherlands on transferring money from the Netherlands to their countries of origin. The most important conclusions of this report were that there was a lack of transparency within the Dutch remittances market, that migrants were not aware of the different money transfer possibilities, and that migrants were often charged high costs for transferring money to their origin countries. The report’s conclusions further fuelled IntEnt’s desire to create a comparative remittances website for the Dutch market.

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was created by IntEnt with two objectives in mind: (1) to provide migrants with accurate information on available money transfer providers, and (2) to promote IntEnt and its other activities among migrants in the Netherlands.

The first objective encompasses a number of sub-goals. When providing users with more

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information on available services and features of those services, IntEnt hoped the website would contribute to better transparency within the remittance market, encouraging the use of formal, more cost-efficient, and safe money transfer methods in the process. This could then lead to increased investment by migrants in their countries of origin, which links to IntEnt's general objective of stimulating migrant entrepreneurship.

The second objective would see the 'Geld Naar Huis' website act as a promotional tool for IntEnt because it reaches the audience IntEnt as a broader organization focuses outreach on. The website could increase IntEnt's brand awareness among migrants, and, consequently, attract additional members to IntEnt's other programs.

The actual development of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website consisted of three phases. In the first phase, which was a pilot period beginning in March 2006, IntEnt launched the first version of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. After a successful start, the second release of the website took place in June 2007. This can be marked as the second phase of the development of the website and involved more in-depth development of the website. During this second release information on the website was updated and exchange rates were added to the website. In September 2009, the website was relaunched. This relaunch marked the start of the third development phase. The relaunch involved an update and expansion of the website in the first half of the year and a large promotion campaign of the services 'Geld Naar Huis' offers among migrants and migrant organizations in the second half of the year. New countries were added to the website, new market players were added, and an attempt was made to make the website more user-friendly. Additionally, the relationships with banks and money transfer operators were revitalized.

3.2 Costs of creation and maintenance of 'Geld Naar Huis'

The initial phase of the creation of the 'Geld naar Huis' website was paid from IntEnt's private funds. The initial costs to set up the website were between €4,000 and €5,000. The 'Geld Naar Huis' website was conceived as a low-maintenance and cost-efficient project at the time.

After the successful launch of the website, IntEnt started to look for alternative funding, and applied for €50,000 in funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further develop the website. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the 'Geld Naar Huis' website with €100,000 between 2007 and 2009. IntEnt also received additional funding of €5,000 from NCDO, €5,000 from HIVOS, €8,150 from the Levi Strauss Foundation, and €70,000 from the European Union Aeneas Program. IntEnt bore the costs of the project manager and public relations activities.

At the beginning of 2010, less than €10,000 was left for IntEnt to spend on the website. This money was mainly spent on personnel costs, and no other major activities were undertaken. Within the 2007 to 2009 period, the major costs for 'Geld Naar Huis' included personnel costs and the promotion campaigns for the website.

3.3 Initial management of 'Geld Naar Huis'

The 'Geld Naar Huis' website has experienced several management changes since its launch in 2006: four management changes took place within this four-year period. From the start of the website, one person was working full-time on the project within IntEnt. In December 2007 the first management change took place, and the project manager was replaced. Then, in March 2008, the second project manager was replaced as well. In March 2009 the current

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

project manager was assigned. Before the current manager was assigned the website was not properly managed for three to four months, since the previous manager left in November 2008. No activities took place in this period apart from regular website updates by other IntEnt employees in their free time.

These management replacements challenged the creation and continuation of certain activities concerning the website, and the development of a clear strategy for the 'Geld Naar Huis' website was delayed. In addition to these management changes, some incidents of previous mismanagement were reported by the interviewees, leading to increasing challenges faced by the 'Geld Naar Huis' current management.

3.4 Promotion of the website

After the website's start many promotional activities, both small and large, were undertaken by the 'Geld Naar Huis' management. The promotion activities included linking the 'Geld Naar Huis' website to other websites such as migrant organization websites, linking of the website to providers and placing provider logos on the website, and conducting media activities such as newspaper articles and radio interviews. This so-called free publicity, was used intensively in 2009. In this period flyers were distributed at festivals and other social gatherings and were given to different migrant organizations, embassies, and shops for distribution among their members or customers.

In 2009 a large publicity campaign was launched to accompany the official relaunch of the website. This publicity campaign involved an extension of the website; the relaunch and the media attention that accompanied it; advertisements in magazines and websites that are often used by migrants in the Netherlands; press releases to national, local, and migrant-specific media; the distribution of flyers at different locations that are often visited by migrants in the Netherlands, and; the distribution of emails with flyers, posters, and articles to different organizations and stakeholders. IntEnt also paid for an advertisement to be featured as a promoted link within the Google search engine. This latter promotion tool proved to be an effective way to raise the website's visibility, but it proved to be expensive. In addition to these promotion activities, a newsletter was developed and posted on the website as an advertisement tool. No large-scale promotion activities were undertaken after the successful relaunch in September 2009.

3.5 Reporting on the website

The website was reported upon frequently within IntEnt. The 'Geld Naar Huis' website management has produced a total of five interim reports since the start of the website in 2006. The interim reports covered the following periods:

- Interim report 1: October 2007 to March 2008
- Interim report 2: March 2008 to September 2008
- Interim report 3: October 2008 to March 2009
- Interim report 4: April 2009 to September 2009
- Interim report 5: August 2009 to December 2009

The interim reports contain an overview of the website's most important developments, the activities that were undertaken during the specified period, the results of the activities that were undertaken, and a financial overview of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. In addition, every interim report contains a plan of action for the coming period.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

In addition to the interim reports written by the website management, a small research project on the prices of money transfer was conducted following the example of the World Bank's 'mystery shopping' evaluations of money transfers. To see whether or not the prices for money transfers were correct, a fixed amount of money was transferred to different countries via different providers. The results showed many inconsistencies in money transfer prices and also resulted in several cases of non-delivery, but the study was not sufficiently robust to make valid inferences about the whole remittance market in the Netherlands

4. 'Geld Naar Huis' Today: Management, Costs, and Funding

4.1 Current management of the website

The 'Geld Naar Huis' website is currently managed by the manager of financial products at IntEnt. This person has been managing the website since March 2009 and combines the activities for the website with other activities at IntEnt. At the beginning the website manager spent 12 hours per week on the website. In 2010 the hours reserved for the 'Geld Naar Huis' website were reduced to eight hours a week due to a shortage of funding. Apart from the reduction of time, the current management is stable.

4.2 Current management activities

As a result of the reduction of hours the manager could dedicate to 'Geld Naar Huis', the website has maintained a low profile in 2010. Currently there is only promotion through Google ads in which IntEnt pays a small commission to Google every time a viewer clicks on the advertisement. The activities undertaken by the manager concerning the website mainly include keeping the prices of money transfers on the website up-to-date and maintaining the relationships with the different banks and money transfer operators.

During interviews with IntEnt employees, however, it became clear that some people working for IntEnt are engaged in small individual promotion activities, often in their own time. This engagement shows the involvement of some of IntEnt's employees in trying to make the 'Geld Naar Huis' website sustainable and successful. At the same time, we witnessed venues where IntEnt attended where no promotion of the website was done, showing a lack of vision and coordinated effort on behalf of IntEnt.

Through independent observation and interviews with IntEnt employees, it has become clear that there the website management currently lacks time and money for innovation and further development of the website. There is, however, clear potential and opportunities for innovation, something which has also been put forward by IntEnt employees. These opportunities for innovation will be elaborately discussed in Chapter 12.

4.3 Current financial situation of 'Geld Naar Huis'

Currently the 'Geld Naar Huis' website operates with a budget of less than €10,000 for 2010. Interviews with IntEnt management revealed that this budget is not sufficient to run an up-to-date and innovative website. It is, however, just enough to run a low profile website in which the prices for money transfers on the website are kept up-to-date. Whether or not this model will be financially sustainable will be discussed in Chapter 10.

5. Services Offered by ‘Geld Naar Huis’

5.1 Information and services provided on the website

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website is comprised of two distinct parts that provide visitors with information relating to available remittance services and features of given remittance services and providers.

The first section is a remittance service calculation engine that provides an overview of available money transfer services based upon the country of destination, the amount of the transfer, fee-sharing arrangements, and the speed of the service. A user is required to provide answers to each of those four fields, and the engine then uses these parameters as a basic filter for available services. The user is then provided with an overview of available services by the provider name, cost for transferring the selected amount, the gross amount (in euros) of the transfer that will be received in the destination country, the exchange rate, and the amount of the transfer in net local currency. These five features are not available for all destination countries, however, and among the 34 destination countries available for selection in the calculation engine, only one (Poland) features complete information for all service providers.² In addition to providing information on the specific features of the service mentioned, the engine also provides links to generic profiles of service providers hosted in another section of the website. The calculation engine and its results are available in Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Arabic.

In addition to the calculation engine, the website provides general information about providers, tips for choosing providers, a newsletter sign-up form, and links to other (remittance) websites. The provider section allows visitors to make a side-by-side comparison of banks and money transaction offices in terms of service accessibility (account requirements), fee sharing structure, transfer urgency and speed, use of favorable/unfavorable exchange rates, and delivery of transfer via correspondent banks or points of issue. This section also provides a list of providers represented on ‘Geld Naar Huis’, but additional information on providers is not available in English. In the Dutch-language version of the website, limited information on individual providers is available such as links to the provider website and list of locations, links to exchange rate information, characteristics of the provider, and links to more information on the provider in general. It is worth noting that this is the only section on the website that is not available in both Dutch and English. In addition to this section, the website also provides a series of tips for choosing providers. Website visitors are advised to consider nine features when determining the best provider for their needs: urgency of the transfer, cost-sharing arrangements, cash receipt versus account-to-account transfer, transfer method (via internet bank account, phone, office visit, email, etc.), exchange rate, cost transparency, frequency of transfer, locality and availability of pick-up locations in destination country, and safety of the transfer. Within each of these fields the website briefly describes potential differences among providers and how the total cost of the transfer could potentially be affected depending on the sender’s preferences. The website offers visitors the opportunity to subscribe to a newsletter and provides links to other remittance service comparison websites and websites relating to the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website.

² We believe that this is the case because Poland is an EU Member State in which transparent banking regulations would make the information easier to ascertain as well as more familiarity of the financial system.

5.2 Countries represented on the website

The website initially provided information on five countries in its first incarnation. These were countries in which IntEnt worked with its other projects. This country choice was thus linked on the expertise and contacts of IntEnt and to one of the initial goals of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website: promotion of IntEnt.

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management currently bases its country choice on the number of people of the migrant-sending countries that are currently living in the Netherlands. The minimum number of inhabitants for a country to be included in the website is around 10,000. Some countries such as Nigeria, however, because of the perception that the resident migrant population remits substantially to their home country, and many informal remittances channels are used by this population. A combination of criteria thus guides the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management to choose countries to be represented on their website.

The website management does not base its country choice on the aggregate cash flow taking place between the Netherlands and the other countries. The reason for this is that it is difficult to measure the amount of money that is being transferred between the Netherlands and the receiving country due to a lack of reliable data and differences among information sources.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 44 countries with a diaspora of 10,000 individuals or more resident in the Netherlands (CBS, 2010).³ Of those countries, 25 are represented on the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website. These countries are: Afghanistan, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Philippines, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Cape Verde, Morocco, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Somalia, Suriname, Turkey, and Vietnam⁴. The countries not represented on the website with a diaspora of 10,000 or more resident in the Netherlands are generally those with similar banking structures and institutions; notable exceptions to this are Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Thailand.

Currently IntEnt has ideas of new countries to include on the website, such as Thailand and Russia as well as others.⁵ No action will be taken on adding these countries, however, until after the evaluation of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the future of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has concluded.

5.3 The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ newsletter

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ newsletter was published once, in December 2009. This publication was issued partially in combination with the re-launch of the website, in September 2009, and served as a promotion tool for the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website. The newsletter was published in Dutch and English and included, among other things, a contest in which people could win the

³ The CBS data generally disaggregates resident migrant data by country of origin, but it does not do so for individuals from countries in former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. It does not indicate how many individuals coming from any one of the countries resulting from the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovenia) or Czechoslovakia (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) are resident in the Netherlands, it simply notes the total number for all countries in these former kingdoms.

⁴ Also included in the calculation engine are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia, but as none of these countries singularly features a diaspora of 10,000 or more, they were not included on this list.

⁵ The decisions on what corridors to include are made based on where they have strong contacts and where IntEnt thinks the largest flows of money are going.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

transaction costs of their remitted money back, a call for new ideas for the website, and a personal story of a person that regularly remits money to family members back home. The response to the contest was low, and not many people subscribed to the newsletter. Users of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website can currently still subscribe to the newsletter by filling in a form online.

As the newsletter was initially used as a promotion tool, the newsletter in its current format may not provide many incentives for website users to subscribe as it contains mostly promotion for the website and not any other news or information that is specifically relevant to individuals who regularly remit money to family members or friends living abroad. A regular, up-to-date, and informative newsletter could help the 'Geld Naar Huis' website to actively engage its users. To create such a publication was initially the goal of the website management, but after the first publication, time and money issues prevented the continuation and elaboration of the newsletter.

The small survey conducted among users of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website included some questions on the newsletter (see Appendix 1). Only one participant had subscribed to the newsletter of 'Geld Naar Huis'. Of the people who were not subscribed, 11 people indicated that they would be interested in subscribing to the newsletter.

When asked about suggestions for the content of the newsletter, people indicated that they would like to read more about new developments among banks and MTOs, innovations in remittances channels, new cheaper ways of making money transfers, special discount rates or specials, information for people that want to send bigger amounts, information for people that are doing business in their home country, and general news about the financial markets in the home countries.

6. Users of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website: Numbers and Profiles

6.1 Visitors of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website

The goal of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management was to have a minimum of 300,000 visitors per year. This goal has not yet been reached. The number of visitors has grown substantially in the three years that the website has been active, however. In 2007, a little over 17,000 visits were paid to the website. After that, in 2008, the website reached over 18,000 visits. In 2009, the year in which the website was relaunched, over 32,000 visits were registered on the website. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of visits for the different years. In 2010, the number of visitors has increased again, and the total number of visitors for 2010 will most likely surpass the number of 2009.

As Table 1 shows the number of visits to the website increased substantially directly after a promotion campaign, such as the one in September 2009. This clearly shows the effect of ‘Geld Naar Huis’ promotion campaigns. As the number of visits decreases again a few months after the campaign, continuous or regular promotion campaigns are apparently a necessity to keep the number of visits high. The number of visitors has increased over the years, however, and appears to be relatively stable in 2010.

Table 1: Number of website visits: 2007 - 2010

	2007	2008	2009	2010
January	641	1657	1546	4,764
February	648	1225	1511	3,858
March	794	1484	1667	4,247
April	758	1427	1590	3,846
May	1092	1759	1536	3,765
June	1560	1759	1931	2,987
July	1245	1760	2063	3,184
August	895	1557	1926	4,466
September	1005	1401	5517	-
October	4982	1487	3928	-
November	1858	1246	3078	-
December	1705	1519	6387	-
Total	17183	18281	32680	(31,127)*

* Total number of users for January to August 2010

6.2 Country information consulted on the website

Table 2 presents the countries for which the prices for money transfers was most often consulted in the period 2007 to 2010. As this table shows the country information for Surinam was most popular, followed by Morocco, Turkey, and the Dutch Antilles. Ghana, Indonesia, and the Philippines are also high on the list of countries for which information is most often consulted. Unfortunately, no time-comparison could be made with the data available.

Table 2: Country information consulted on the website

2007 to 2010

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>
Surinam	2696	Poland	124
Morocco	1883	Romania	124
Turkey	1106	Nigeria	114
Dutch Antilles	851	Ethiopia	110
Ghana	519	Hungary	99
Indonesia	443	Pakistan	82
Philippines	418	DR Congo	73
China	344	Sierra Leone	66
Brazil	329	Cape Verde	55
Afghanistan	267	Croatia	54
India	249	Somalia	54
Colombia	248	Iran	49
Vietnam	186	Ecuador	46
Bosnia Herzegovina	180	Serbia	40
Dominican Republic	174	Iraqi	36
Egypt	144	Macedonia	35
Bulgaria	139	Moldavia	29

6.3 Languages used for the calculation module

The website calculation module became available in multiple languages in July 2009. Of the website visitors that use the calculation module, most people use it in Dutch. In 2009 English was the second language, whereas in 2010 the second language that was chosen was German. In both years, the third country was Arabic. Information is incomplete for both years, however. An overview of the results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Languages used for the calculation module

2009*		2010	
<i>Language</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Dutch	430	1. Dutch	849
2. English	246	2. German	738
3. Arabic	231	3. Arabic	695
4. German	216	4. Turkish	658
5. French	214	5. French	653
6. Turkish	188	6. Spanish	644
7. Spanish	178	7. English	643
8. Portuguese	172	8. Portuguese	597

* From July 2009 ** Until September 2010

Most of the participants of the online survey (84 percent) indicated that they mostly consult the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website in Dutch. Other languages included English (8 percent), Spanish (4 percent), and German (4 percent).

6.4 References to the website

Online search engines form the largest source of reference to the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website. Of all the online search engines, Google is most often used (see Table 4). If the references from Google to the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website are a direct result of IntEnt’s investment in Google Ads is difficult to research, but it may indicate that IntEnt’s decision to advertise via Google is a cost-effective one. As the table shows, the number of references from Google is

lower this year than in 2009.

Table 4: Search engines references

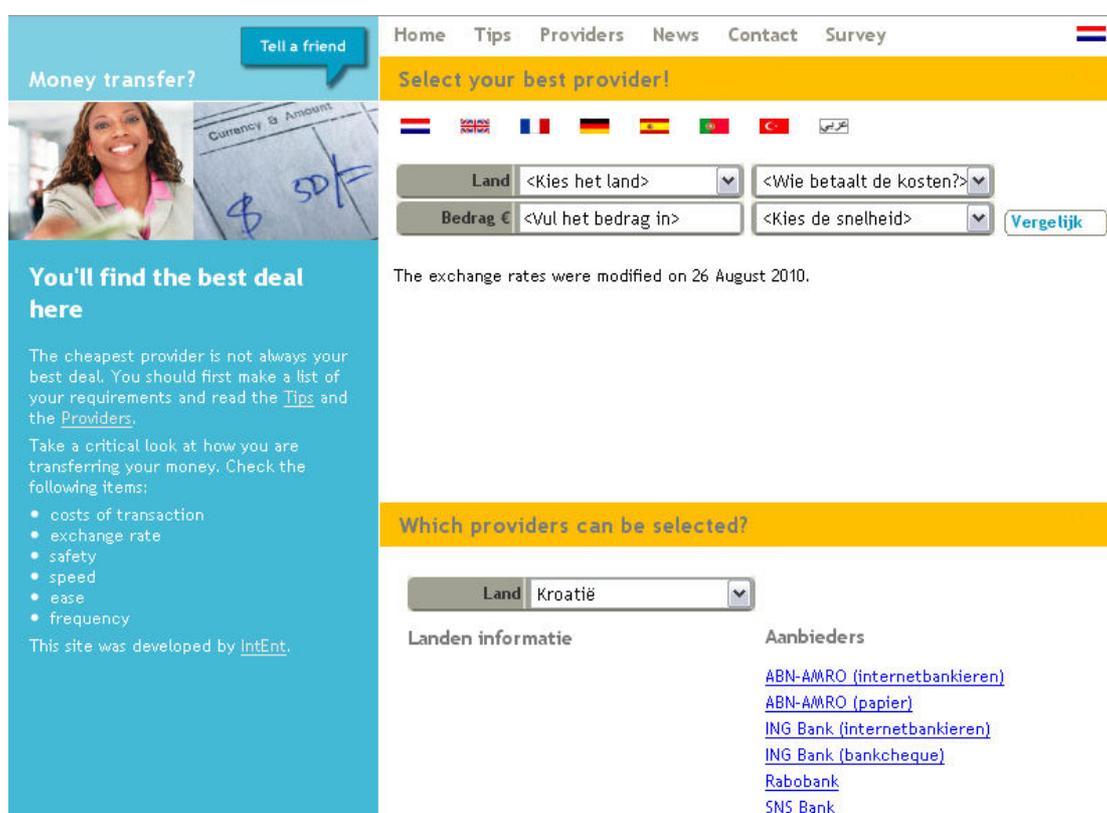
	2008	2009	2010
Google	651	3.479	1,843
AskJeeves	61	97	98
Yahoo	2	10	20
Yandex	0	3	10
AOL	0	5	4
Altavista	1	1	2
MSN	4	10	1
T-Online	0	0	1
Ilse	0	8	0
Total	719	3.613	1.979

7. User-Friendliness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website

7.1 General user-friendliness: A subjective evaluation

The website is moderately user-friendly, and its major flaws rest in the format and language availability of different parts of the site. As mentioned prior, the website is split into two major components: a transfer channel comparison calculator and an informational section. The comparison calculator is available on the website's homepage: it is situated below the top section headings as can be seen in the image below.

Image 1: ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Homepage (English)



The comparison calculator functions as an embedded object within the website, and its language can be changed by clicking one of the flags above the calculator (but below the website's main headings). While this would seem intuitively simple, it is somewhat complicated because the language settings of the main website (all other aspects of the website) can be chosen via the flag in the upper right corner of the page. The language selection via the calculator section does not apply to the rest of the page. The language conversion is also not consistent across the entire website. While it is somewhat of a minor detail, the homepage features a section (on the bottom-half of the page, as can be seen in the above image) that provides an overview of providers available by destination country. Even if the English-language version is selected, this section remains in Dutch. Indeed, any specific information on providers (regardless of which language version the link to this section appears in) is only in Dutch, which significantly reduces information access.

In addition to inconsistent language conversion, other small aspects of the website format can make navigation difficult. In the informational section describing available providers, it is not immediately clear that the left-hand column describes banks while the right-hand column describes money transfer operators because of the placement of the page heading.

Despite these minor flaws, the website's navigation is straight-forward, and it is clear under which headings information can be located. The section on tips for choosing remittance service providers is well presented and provides users with easy to understand criteria to consider when choosing a provider; the information is generic enough so as to apply to both MTOs and banks. The website provides a wide variety of links to other service comparison websites as well as to sites that are better tailored to the Dutch context.

7.2 User-friendliness: Voices from the users

The participants of our online survey rated the user-friendliness of the 'Geld Naar Huis' website mostly as user-friendly (n = 13), very user-friendly (n = 12), or neutral (n = 12), while 11 people did not provide an answer to this question. See Table 5 for an overview.

Table 5: User-friendliness of the website: Results from the online survey

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
The website is very user-friendly	12	24.0
The website is user-friendly	13	26.0
Neutral	12	24.0
The website is not user-friendly	1	2.0
The website is not user-friendly at all	1	2.0
Missing	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

When asked about their satisfaction with the information the website provides them, the survey respondents were a little less positive. Most people reported their satisfaction with the information provided by the website to be neutral (n = 15) or satisfied (n = 12) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Satisfaction with the information provided: Results from the online survey

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very satisfied	8	16.0
Satisfied	12	24.0
Neutral	15	30.0
Unsatisfied	2	4.0
Very unsatisfied	2	4.0
Missing	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

When asked about *why* the respondents were satisfied or unsatisfied with the information provided on the website, most of the people indicated, on a positive note, that the information is clear and sufficient. Also positive were remarks such as that the website is to the point and gives a good overview in a small amount of time. The fact that the website is easy to use was also something that the participants of the online survey indicated.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Negative remarks that were most often mentioned were that not all countries were represented on the website, that not all possibilities for money transfers are presented, and that the information is not completely up-to-date. See Table 7 for a complete overview.

Even though the sample of respondents is very small, and their opinions are not necessarily representative for the total population of ‘Geld Naar Huis’ users, the overall picture shows that the website is clear and easy to use. The website does not include all information possible, and the information is sometimes incorrect, however. The criticisms levied on the website from respondents of the online survey parallel those uncovered in the course of the subjective evaluation (discussed above), in-depth interviews with IntEnt staff, and participants in the focus groups/round-table discussions.

Table 7: Responses to open questions on satisfaction with information

	<i>Number of times mentioned</i>
Positive remarks	
The information is clear and sufficient	6
The website is clear and to the point	4
It is a fast way to get a good overview	3
It gives exactly the information needed	1
The website is easy to use	2
Negative remarks	
Not all countries are represented	4
Not all possibilities for transfers are mentioned	2
The information is not totally up-to-date	2
The information provided about costs is not correct	1
The website should include costs of money withdrawal in remittances receiving countries	1
Not all costs that are involved with money transfers are included	1
There is no information on the speed of the transfer	1

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was given an overall score of 6.7 points on a scale from 1 to 10 for how happy people are with the services the website provides. The minimum score that was given was 1, and the maximum score that was given was 10 (standard deviation = 2.07). Unfortunately, there was no open question in the survey as to why people provided these answers to this question.

7.2 Perceptions on information provided

The results presented above are supported by the following information that was derived from the online survey. As Table 8 shows, most participants were neutral on how up-to-date the information is that the website provides. Eleven people stated that the website provided up-to-date information, and six people indicated that the website is *very* up-to-date.

Table 8: Perceptions on how up-to-date the website functions

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
The website is very up-to-date	6	12.0
The website is up-to-date	11	22.0
Neutral	17	34.0

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

The website is not up-to-date	4	8.0
The website is not up-to-date at all	1	2.0
Missing	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

In terms of the reliability of the money transfer prices (that the prices shown on the website match actual incurred costs), most people indicated that the information is almost always correct (n = 18) or always correct (n = 13). See Table 9 for a complete overview.

Table 9: Reliability of money transfer prices: Results from the online survey

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
The information is always correct	13	26.0
The information is almost always correct	18	36.0
The information is sometimes correct	6	12.0
The information is almost never correct	1	2.0
The information is never correct	1	2.0
Missing	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

7.3 Subscription to the newsletter

The newsletter can be subscribed to via a form available on the website; the form asks for the name and email address of the subscriber and other individuals whom the subscriber thinks may also be interested in the newsletter. The process is relatively low effort and easy to complete. Potential subscribers are provided with a link to the first newsletter on the same page to allow for a preview of the newsletter content, which is helpful for potential subscribers because the newsletter content is not described in any detail. To generate more interest in the newsletter, it may be helpful for the contents of the newsletter to be described.

7.4 Suggested improvements by the users of ‘Geld Naar Huis’

Respondents of the online survey provided several suggestions for improvements to the website. Within the focus group of remittances senders, the participants also gave some suggestions on how to make the website more attractive despite not being current users of the website. During the round table discussion with providers, there were also a couple of main suggestions given for improvement of the site.

The suggestions from the online survey include: provide better up-to-date information, do more screening for reliability of a provider, make the website easier to navigate through, add more countries to compare, make the objective of the website more clear, include advertisements, include speed of processing time, and include possible pay out currencies.

The focus group of remittance senders suggested having more general financial and news information on the website as well as a user’s forum or blog for sharing experiences.

The providers suggested to add the website to a larger high profile project and to make the site more modern. They complained that the website was not attractive and looked old fashioned.

8. Efficiency of the 'Geld Naar Huis' Website

8.1 Banks and MTOs on the website

The website provides hyperlinks to almost all of the providers featured on the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. These providers are: ABN AMRO, DHB Bank, Fortis, GWK, ING, Money Express, MoneyGram, Rabobank, SNS, and Western Union. For each provider the website attempts to provide links for the establishment in general, exchange rate information given by the particular provider, and other relevant characteristics of the provider. The website does not provide links for all of these subheadings for all providers, and there is a range of difference in the specificity of links available among the providers. No links are presented for Rabobank, and only links to the general information pages of DHB, SNS, and Money Express are given. Links to general information and exchange rate pages are given for GWK/Western Union (when one clicks on GWK for more information, the website redirects the user to the profile for Western Union), ABN AMRO, and ING (which also features additional links for more information). Some information is also provided for Fortis, but as Fortis and ABN AMRO have merged operations, it is not relevant to provide information for this provider. As has been noted before, all information on providers is presented in Dutch, even when the hyperlink provided directs the user to a website that is also available in other languages.

8.2 Cooperation with banks and MTOs: IntEnt's point of view

The initial goal of IntEnt in terms of the cooperation with banks and MTOs on the 'Geld Naar Huis' website was to eventually shift the maintenance of the website from the website's management to the remittances market players themselves. An automatic system was to be developed in which the information on the 'Geld Naar Huis' website was automatically updated according to the information on the websites of the banks and MTOs. This procedure, also called 'scratching', would in the end make the information transfer between banks/MTOs and IntEnt automatic.

This envisioned cooperation between the website management and banks and MTOs is currently not running smoothly, however. Even though the contact between IntEnt and the providers are positive, it is difficult to engage banks and MTOs in the website. Banks purportedly see no market potential in the migrant population in the Netherlands and act accordingly. Reaching out to the remittance market is not institutionalized in banks, and they often do not have the man-power to respond to requests from IntEnt. Some banks that do cooperate closely with IntEnt took on the project as a form of corporate social responsibility. The 'Geld Naar Huis' management currently has good contact with Rabobank and ABN, who made the website part of their corporate social responsibility activities.

Money transfer operators have different and varying reasons to either engage or not engage in the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. Some MTOs are expensive and do not benefit from transparency in the market. Other, more mainstream MTOs have a monopoly position in the Dutch remittance market and/or in certain corridors and do not see any need to work closely with the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. Many small MTOs do not engage in the website because they simply do not have the manpower.

Therefore, in their effort to keep the money transfer prices on the website up-to-date, the 'Geld Naar Huis' management retrieves information from the websites of banks and MTOs or

from making weekly phone calls to the respective institutions.

8.3 Cooperation with banks and MTOs: the point of view of service providers

The level of cooperation between ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and money transfer service providers is limited, and this is due, at least in part, to the structure of the remittance market. Opportunities for cooperation and the constraints to cooperation were discussed with representatives of the financial sector during the round-the-table meeting, and the results will be discussed in brief here to provide some insight into the relationship between ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and providers.

Money transfer service providers can be very broadly broken up into two types: banks and money transfer operators. The relationship between each type of institute and the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website is quite different, which reflects the different roles each plays in the remittance market. When asked about how useful the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website is for service providers, the answers given differed by provider type. A representative from MoneyGram International noted that the website offered them a valuable opportunity to increase the visibility of their competitive advantages in specific corridors, especially as their main competitor (Western Union) provides less information to users. Another participant representing a smaller MTO that provides services to one main destination country added that the website provides smaller businesses an important opportunity to increase visibility, which would otherwise be quite difficult because of the high profile of the major leading MTOs. The representative from the Dutch Association of Banks (NVB) had a very different opinion: he noted that participation in the website on behalf of banks did not feel like an advantageous choice. He noted: “I think they see it as something inevitable... they have to go along with it because it's the Ministry. It's not really a tool, but it's not really an option *not* to do it.” When pushed further and asked if banks then view participation in the website as an annoyance, the representative stated that participation in the website requires time, yet there is no distinct advantage to being represented on the website. He also stated that remittances do not represent a particularly valuable business opportunity for banks because remittances—which were traditionally cash-to-cash transfers—are better sent via companies that are specialized in remittances. Banks lack both the interest to become more visible on the remittance market and the infrastructure because of the progressive move away from cash transfers. With that said, the NVB representative expressed a desire to see banks' (albeit limited) involvement be more commended and highlighted by money transfer comparison initiatives such as ‘Geld Naar Huis’. The representative noted that the current political reflex is to address the role of banks in an accusatory way by noting that they are not providing more solutions to the lack of competition in the remittance market. While he also agreed that banks are not necessarily innovators in this field, he said that they would be recognized for participating even though they do not directly gain from it.

Throughout the discussion the participants noted that the barriers they faced in wanting to contribute to the website. The NVB representative noted that the information collection method employed by the website administrators was cumbersome and time-consuming because it relies upon an individual bank representative arranging regular meetings with the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ representative to update fees and foreign exchange rates. He suggested that an automated process in which linkages are made between the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and individual banks' websites that allows for automatic updating of fees was the envisioned future of the information-collection process since the website's launch, and the fact that it has not yet moved in this direction has left some banks feeling like they are spending too much time on a process that will not benefit them.⁶ Another participant agreed and stated that a

⁶ It is worth noting that the position of the NVB representative somewhat contrasts to that of individual bank representatives. In a discussion with an IntEnt staff member, it was noted that banks were patently

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

much more time-effective strategy would be to provide individual providers with login credentials so they could update the fees and rates themselves on a regular basis. This would allow providers to maintain some control over the information presented, and it would engage them more directly in the evolution of the website. The participants were quick to note that this information provision method carries with it the risk of intentionally misrepresenting information, but if the website administrators maintained oversight over the information-collection process and conducted verification exercises (such as mystery shopping), it would be a more efficient method.

This topic led naturally to discussion of how providers as well as ‘Geld Naar Huis’ could benefit financially from cooperation. Participants were asked if they would be interested in advertising on the website or in a different type of money-generation scheme (such as allowing ‘Geld Naar Huis’ to provide links directly to online money transfer services for a small commission fee if someone who has clicked on the link from the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website completes a money transfer). The reaction from among the participants seemed tepid, and one noted that participation in this type of action would be a matter of cost efficiency. Participation would be difficult to encourage if the volume of visitors to the website remains so limited because providers would not have access to a large enough body of new customers to justify the expense.

The round-the-table discussion also highlighted perceptions that providers have about the website. One participant noted that the website seems like a stand-alone initiative that has only limited visibility. If it were placed in a larger context of other Ministry-led initiatives, like the “Week van het Geld” (Week of the Money) initiative designed by the Ministry of Finance and CentiQ to increase knowledge of finance among children, then the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website would become more visible and foster cooperation among different types of financial actors. By embedding the website in a larger scheme, the legitimacy of the website would seem more concrete to financial bodies that have no inherent interest in the remittance market. Participants in the discussion noted that the website does not seem to be widely used, which is at least partially reflected in the small number of users who reach individual providers' websites via ‘Geld Naar Huis’. One participant suggested that providing posters or other promotional materials at providers' points of sale would make consumers aware of the site's existence while also demonstrating to providers that the website is doing its part to generate potential future business for providers. Another suggestion was to update the website's interface because it looks old-fashioned, informal, and not specific to financial products. In addition to this the website should feature logos of the providers to increase brand recognition.

8.4 Knowledge sharing with other websites

In the earlier phases of the development of the website, IntEnt exchanged experiences with people working on similar initiatives in the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. The current management of IntEnt was also contacted by representatives from Germany for advice. In addition, email contact took place with representatives from Norway and England in the spring of 2009. The current management of ‘Geld Naar Huis’ has been in contact with the German website providers only twice. Apart from that there has not been any regular contact. The information exchange that took place mainly consisted of mutual advice on how to motivate banks and MTOs to lower their prices for money transfers. In addition, experiences were exchanged on how to retrieve the information on prices from banks and

unwilling to adopt an automated system. This may suggest that the NVB could play a more instrumental role in mediating between banks and the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management team in terms of interests and potential solutions to information procedures deemed undesirable by both parties.

MTOs that IntEnt puts on its website.

Due to time and money constraints, the current management chose to focus on improving the 'Geld Naar Huis' website, and indicated that this process is different for every country and every system. IntEnt does have the plan to initiate and restore contacts with representatives of websites in other countries in the future, however.

Since the launch of the website, the following links to websites offering remittances-prices comparisons of other countries have been posted on the website: www.geldtransfair.de, www.voidargent.fr, www.duplaoportunidade.org, www.sendmoneyhome.org, www.moneymove.org, www.geldnaarhuis.nl, www.sendpenger.no, www.remesas.org.

There has been frequent contact with staff from the World Bank. In the summer of 2009, a meeting took place between the 'Geld Naar Huis' website and a remittances specialist at the World Bank. Then a meeting took place in Washington with other representatives of the World Bank. The first meeting was mainly about remittances in general, the method employed by the World Bank in their own remittances prices comparison website, and the certification the World Bank provides to websites from other countries. The second meeting concerned the possibility of expanding the website to include other countries and features discussion of each site's research practices. In both meetings IntEnt brought up the issue of funding but received no concrete responses from the World Bank representatives.

Apart from these visits information exchange has taken place with representatives from the World Bank through email. The 'Geld Naar Huis' management also visits the World Bank's website frequently and compares their information with the information provided on the 'Geld Naar Huis' website. 'Geld Naar Huis' has the link of the World Bank site on its website.

9. Effectiveness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website

9.1 Initial objectives

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was created by IntEnt for a number of different reasons. First, one of the goals was to provide migrants with information on cost-efficient and safe ways to make money transfers, and better transparency in the money transfer market would lead to competition and a better price-quality ratio. This way, money transfers could increase and migrants could be engaged more in investing in the local economies of their home countries. In addition, transparency in the market would lead to better services and a more trustworthy system, and the use of formal remittance channels would increase.

Second, the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website would function as an important promotional tool for IntEnt. The website reaches the target group of IntEnt: immigrants in the Netherlands. By making use of the website, migrants would be able to get into contact with IntEnt, IntEnt would be able to increase its brand awareness, and, consequently, IntEnt would be able to increase its members. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website would indirectly be a tool to increase the interests of migrants living in the Netherlands to engage in entrepreneurship in their home countries.

In addition to the qualitative assessment of the website and its functionality, a more thorough understanding of how the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has met its objectives can be achieved by speaking with (potential) users of the website directly. To gain better insight into how the website met specific objectives such as increasing migrants' awareness and use of different formal transfer channels, users of the website and representatives of civil society were consulted directly. This was done by both the electronic survey and a focus group discussion organized among migrants, all of whom sent remittances and have lived in the Netherlands for five or more years. The results provided from the online survey are additionally insightful when coupled with the results from the focus group, which provides more in-depth guidance on some of the issues touched upon in the online survey.

9.2 Market transparency

Both the short survey and the focus group helped to determine if transparency in the Dutch remittance market has increased. Questions that inspired the consultations included: *Have migrants gained a better understanding of remittance costs and channels? Do migrants now make more use of formal transfer channels?*

Within the focus group only one participant was familiar with the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, and the respondent had not used the website. Despite the lack of knowledge about the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, the focus group respondents acknowledged that the website could be useful, especially as most used Western Union or MoneyGram to transfer money because of familiarity and accessibility.

The same conclusion is supported by the results from another survey conducted for Oxfam Novib regarding the remittance service wants and needs of African migrants living in select European countries. Among the 277 migrants in the Netherlands surveyed for this project, fewer than five percent reported using the website (Siegel and Vanore, 2010).

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Most people that participated in the online survey had reached the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website by searching on the internet, for example through Google (30 percent). Another 20 percent of participants knew about the website through a migrant organization. Others heard about the website through other media such as the newspaper, radio, or television (8 percent), through advertisements on a festival or other social gathering (8 percent), or via other websites. Only two percent of people got to ‘Geld Naar Huis’ via a bank, and only 4 percent via a money transfer operator.

The members of the focus group also discussed the way their understanding of costs and methods of sending remittances have changed over their periods of residency in the Netherlands. This question would have provided more insight into the success ‘Geld Naar Huis’ has had in meeting its objectives if users of the website were present in the discussion. The focus group members indicated that their knowledge about the services available for sending money had remained fairly consistent.

The only real change that the participants of the focus group experienced in terms of remittance sending is that requirements for sending money have become more stringent (in terms of having to fill in more forms and provide more specific types of identification). This may relate to the question of whether remittance senders have begun to use formal methods more. When asked this, the focus group members indicated that they all send formally the majority of the time and have since coming to the Netherlands. They also stated, however, that certain informal methods (such as bringing money or gifts oneself on visits home) will never lose certain comparative advantages.

9.3 Price-quality ratio of money transfers

The question of whether or not the price-quality ratio of money transfers has changed over the past years is difficult to answer, and it is inevitably linked to the question of market transparency. Even if a clear answer to the price-quality ratio is received, it is difficult to directly connect this change to effectiveness of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website. We did, however, make an attempt to gain some insights into the price-quality dynamics of money transfers over time.

The focus group participants were asked if they have experienced any fee reductions over the years they have been sending remittances. The idea behind this question was to establish if users felt that the presence of a remittance service comparison website was an adequate catalyst to increasing competition among providers by increasing transparency; as none of the focus group members had used the website, this would be a difficult premise to test. It stands to reason, however, that if the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website (or any other comparison website, for that matter) could foster better competition—thus lowering prices—that the effects would be felt for users of transfer services in general, not just users of the website. Among the focus group participants, none reported that costs had decreased. They noted that remittance-sending fees regularly fluctuate, and the only time there is consistent cost reduction is when the sender is part of a provider-specific bonus program. One participant also noted that fees are reduced when larger volumes of money are sent infrequently, but as this has been the reigning logic for money transfers for many providers and corridors, this may simply reflect that the remittance market has remained fairly static.

When asked whether or not they thought that prices of money transfers had gone down in the past few years, the participants in the online survey mostly stated that they did not know ($n = 21$). Eight people said that prices indeed had gone down whereas 9 people answered they did not. Twelve people did not respond to this question.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

It may be worth noting here, however, that in the round-the-table discussion with financial service providers, several participants noted that costs within their own business have decreased over the past few years. While they did not believe that increased transparency as the result of efforts of websites like ‘Geld Naar Huis’ was the catalyst for this, one participant representing MoneyGram International did state that the fee reduction in certain corridors has made ‘Geld Naar Huis’ a valuable resource for providers because they enable consumers to view certain providers' corridor-specific advantages.

10. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ Website in Comparison

While the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website provides hyperlinks to a range of other remittance comparison websites, very few other European remittance websites link back to ‘Geld Naar Huis’. Among the websites discussed below (see Annex 5 for a table listing features of the websites), only the German remittance website “GeldtransFAIR”, the Norwegian website “Sende Penger”, the Italian website “Manda sol dia Casa”, and the UK website “Money Move” provide links to ‘Geld Naar Huis’. The World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide website also provides a link to ‘Geld Naar Huis’ under its section for country-specific remittance comparison sites that lack the certification of the World Bank.

For the sake of this evaluation, the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website will be assessed (at least in part) against the other remittance comparison websites serving European-based transfer corridors. The most relevant of these sites are: GeldtransFAIR (Germany), Envoi d’Argent (France), Dupla Oportunidade (Portugal), Remesas.org (Spain), Sende Penger (Norway), Manda sol dia Casa (Italy), and Money Move (United Kingdom). In addition to the European-specific comparison websites mentioned, three internationally-oriented websites (the World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide website, Send Money Home.org, and the Mondato [Search Portal for Value Transfer] website) are also relevant sources of comparison.

Appendix 5 provides a quick overview of the websites mentioned and allows for a superficial comparison of the websites based upon the countries covered, the available navigation languages, the information provided, and the user friendliness (in the case of European-specific websites) or timeliness of information (for international websites). More detailed information about each of these aspects is provided below.

10.1 European Country Websites

A quick glance at the table in Appendix 5 reveals a number of marked differences among the remittance comparison websites, a fact that is attributable (at least in part) to the intended coverage and audience of European remittance comparison sites. The different scope and audience of the websites creates wide divergence in terms of website content, and as such these require some discussion as a preface to any comparison between the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website and other European remittance comparison sites.

Of the individual country websites listed, GeldtransFAIR, Envoi d’Argent, Money Move, and Manda sol dia Casa aim to provide a similar service to that of ‘Geld Naar Huis’. While these websites may tailor the information provided to a more particular cause or audience, each features a frequently-updated service comparison calculator that enables users to achieve a swift overview of providers and services available between specified sending- and receiving countries. This functionality points to the development of the websites as a tool to aid consumers in choosing the most appropriate (formal) remittance service provider.

The remaining national databases—Remesas.org, Sende Penger, and Dupla Oportunidade—have taken a “snapshot” of remittance services, providers, and costs within an extremely limited timeframe, and they have done so to provide consumers a provisional guide of available services and their costs within very particular transfer corridors. Rather than attempting to offer consumers an up-to-date and comprehensive guide of providers and costs, these websites focus more generally on features of the remittance market and how these features affect remittance-sending behavior. Due to the different scope and function of these

websites, it would not be as productive to compare and contrast ‘Geld Naar Huis’ to these websites. With that said, the websites discussed here do have strong points that could be fitted to the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ format and these points will be discussed below.

10.1.1 Website Scope and Coverage

Given the degree of overlap in terms of intended audience and functionality within the first mentioned group of country websites (those with constantly-updated comparison calculators), it will be helpful to compare and contrast ‘Geld Naar Huis’ to the other websites within this group. One starting point for comparison is the number of corridors mapped by the websites. The chart notes that the range of countries covered by the comparison calculators varies among the sending-country websites from 14 (Manda sol dia Casa) to 34 (Geld Naar Huis). The number of remittance destination countries covered by the websites is highly indicative of the information-collection needs of the website; the volume of information required to “map” the provider options for a large number of often highly-distinct remittance corridors implies the need for a more efficient data-collection system. It is perhaps no coincidence that the website with the fewest number of destination countries mapped via the comparison calculator has received World Bank certification. The methodological standards formulated by the World Bank for certification can require a massive coordination effort to ensure that data is comparable and accurate; two requirements to receive certification that may be particularly taxing are double price points gathering and validation of fees and speed via mystery shopping exercises. These requirements may be easily met within one corridor (or within comparable corridors), but with each added destination country comes additional providers (and thus additional validation requirements). To this end it is interesting to note that ‘Geld Naar Huis’ provides information over a wide range of destination countries, many of which are geographically, politically, and institutionally distant. While there is room for improvement in the quality and volume of information available about providers with services to each of those 34 countries, the number of countries covered does indicate that the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has clear potential to meet the needs of a range of consumers. One aim of providing a provider comparison function is to allow remittance-senders to evaluate the services that best meet specific needs (such as speed, cost structure, total transfer cost, payout in local currency, etc.). To meet this aim it is imperative that a range of providers are profiled within a given corridor, and this is one point on which the Italian website Manda sol dia Casa has set an example to be emulated. The Manda sol dia Casa website provides information on the providers that generate at least sixty percent of the total market share within a given corridor⁷, a process that can entail profiling providers that may function only in one specific corridor. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website has achieved this same standard in some corridors, but it would do well to provide this degree of coverage in all corridors.

10.1.2 Website Language

The next point of comparison among these websites is the languages in which websites are offered. As can be seen from the comparison table, only the German website GeldtransFAIR and the UK website Money Move are offered in only one language. Manda sol dia Casa and ‘Geld Naar Huis’ both offer dual language options (native language and English), and Envoi d’Argent offers the choice among several languages (translated via an external site). While the language interface is somewhat stiff on the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website because of its particular format, it does succeed in reaching out to communities that would perhaps not have access to any of the information provided on the website because of language limitations. As the comparison calculator is (arguably) the cornerstone of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, the

⁷ This is yet another requirement for achieving World Bank certification.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

availability of the comparison calculator in multiple languages offers clear advantages to the website's users, and the expansion of available languages (and/or the expansion of the website's informational sections in additional languages) would further cement "Geld Naar Huis's" advantage.

As can be expected among websites with similar audiences and functionality, a great deal of the information provided by these websites is shared among all of the websites. Rather than providing an exhaustive, site-by-site list of the information provided, it would be most helpful to highlight distinct features of each of the websites. The first website in the table, GeldtransFAIR, provides a unique opportunity for consumers to interact and offer insight both to each other and to the website operators via a discussion forum. While the merits of this function can be debated, this is a novel way to promote information exchange and learning among both consumers and providers. The French website Envoi d'Argent provides a huge volume of information, not all of which may be suitable for a straight-forward, consumer-oriented comparison website. It does, however, provide links to relevant literature as well as a listing of development organizations and projects by recipient country. This draws a clear link between remittances and their potential use as vital inputs to development initiatives, and the clear manner in which they are presented may engage remittance-senders who would normally not be engaged in development initiatives due to lack of participation in diaspora (or similar community) organizations. The Manda sol dia Casa website provides a glossary of terms used throughout the website; this section provides a quick reference that helps connect the terminology used to the activities of users. The glossary may help promote financial literacy by making information as accessible to users as possible, and it further reinforces the website as a generic guide to financial services. The Money Move website provides an extensive list of links to diaspora organizations, community groups, and diplomatic missions. This linkage to external information providers may help promote the growth of remittance comparison websites as responsive to the communities they attempt to serve, and it could further help encourage the promotion of the website via other websites.

10.1.3 User Friendliness

The last point of comparison with other country-specific comparison websites is user-friendliness. While user-friendliness is necessarily subjective to the experience of individual users, several aspects of functionality and interface should be discussed as a way of suggesting a more cohesive end product.

One obvious element of user-friendliness that has been mentioned prior is language availability. While it is already a step forward to offer information and website services in multiple languages, it is also important that the language settings are easy to use and provide accurate translation. Among the websites that are offered in multiple languages, each features a (minor) flaw in the language interface. In the case of Envoi d'Argent, the translation of the website via an external translation engine makes translation sometimes too literal or incomplete. In addition, the translation engine does not always include all frames in the translation, the result of which is that parts of the website remain in French even though it appears to be part of a section that has been translated. In both the 'Geld Naar Huis' and Manda sol dia Casa websites, the website is available in both English and the native language. On both websites the translation is not fully complete, and small sections remain in the native language despite a nearly-complete translation into English. In the case of 'Geld Naar Huis', the change between languages can be confusing because there are two separate controls for language settings: one for the website in total, and one for the comparison calculator by itself. While it becomes clear after changing the language settings that there are two sets of language controls, this feature can seem misleading (particularly as there are six languages that the comparison calculator can be accessed in that are not available for accessing the website in

total in).

Another feature of the websites that can lower their overall user friendliness is information organization. Given the amount of information being represented, even in a relatively self-contained element like a comparison table, it can be easy for the information to become overwhelming to users. This is especially true when information is poorly categorized or ill-defined, or when the distinction that determines categorization is not intuitive for the user. This is the case particularly for Money Move, which provides information on both the location and method of transfer that can appear to be the same. For instance, the location may be defined as “pre-paid card/online”, and the method may be indicated as “electronic/online”; while this may be an understandable distinction and categorization for someone who is familiar with the terms and methods, to a user unfamiliar with service options it may seem like an odd distinction. The accessibility of information is also influenced by page headings, drop-down menus, and the overall organization of information across different website sections. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and Manda sol dia Casa websites both excel at providing information in a clear and easily-accessed manner. The use of expansion menus (headings that, when clicked, cause information to be displayed and, when clicked a second time, retract the information) makes it particularly easy for only relevant and desired information to be visible. The separation of information beneath clear headings stops the amount of information from feeling overwhelming and also helps express the relationship between subjects.

10.1.4 Other European-based Websites

The other European-based websites covered in the table are not as useful to discuss in depth due to the absence of often-update service comparison calculators. They can, however, still provide suggestions of information that could be included to make the services profiled better encompass the needs and desires of users. It is worth noting that while these websites lack a constantly-updated comparison calculator and may offer only limited corridor coverage, these websites (particularly Sende Penger) explain informal channels, such as hawala operators, and include them in comparisons where appropriate. This is somewhat of a double-edged sword: it would seem counter-intuitive to provide information on informal channels when one of the objectives of a remittance comparison website is to encourage the use of formal channels, but on the other side of this, by providing information on informal channels, the relative disadvantages of using informal methods (such as less than optimal security) also become more apparent. The Spanish website “Remesas.org” and Portuguese website “Dupla Oportunidade” also provide more detailed analysis of the remittance market in the countries of focus. Much of the information provided on these websites would not be appropriate for a consumer-based website like ‘Geld Naar Huis’, but the provision of the information by these websites does highlight the importance of considering audience in designing a business model.

10.2 International Remittance Comparison Websites

In addition to using other European-focused remittance provider comparison websites to highlight the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website’s successes and weaknesses, non-geographic specific remittance comparison websites also have their use in suggesting ways in which the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website could better meet its objectives. There are three comparison websites that are of particular importance to this end: the World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide website, the Mondato (Search Portal for Value Transfer) website, and the Send Money Home website.

Unlike the European-specific websites discussed prior, the three internationally-oriented

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

websites in this section provide a much more encompassing assessment of remittance channels and services. Both because of and despite the large volume of information these websites collect and maintain, the information retrieval system employed by each of these websites offers potentially helpful suggestions to how the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website could become more streamlined, efficient, and contemporary. The scope and scale of these websites make it somewhat difficult to compare with the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website, as they were clearly designed to fulfill a different function; by evaluating the points of success and weakness of each of these websites, however, the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website could benefit by filling the gaps these comprehensive websites fail to bridge. Each website will be briefly described below, and the strengths and weaknesses of each will be treated in turn.

10.2.1 World Bank Remittances Prices Worldwide

As a preface to the description of the World Bank Remittances Prices Worldwide site, it should first be noted that the World Bank as an institution has considerable influence over the development of remittance service and provider comparison websites. The World Bank has developed a list of 12 minimum mandatory requirements that national remittance databases must meet to become certified by the World Bank. This certification not only implies a move toward harmonization of data collection methodologies for remittance databases but also implies a greater level of commitment among international actors to facilitate the flow of private capital (in the form of remittances) to stimulate development. While the lack of the World Bank certification does not per se indicate that a national database lacks a robust and appropriate methodology, the potential to receive the certification does provide website providers with an incentive to meet the World Bank standards (and achieve the recognition that comes with it).

The certification is just one aspect of the World Bank’s involvement in the growing field of remittances (as a catalyst to development), and the World Bank’s role in pioneering research in remittances has given the Remittance Prices Worldwide site added weight, which in turn has influenced the direction of the development of individual country databases. As the World Bank has attempted to formulate a standardized methodology for use in the development of national remittance databases, the Remittance Prices Worldwide can be assessed as a basic model upon which individual country comparison sites can be based⁸.

As with many of the other comparison websites mentioned prior, the World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide provides users with a tool to compare the services available for transferring money between countries. The World Bank comparison calculator allows users to specify both sending and receiving country: users can choose from a list of 24 sending countries (one of which is the Netherlands), and each of those sending countries is linked to a list of sending-country-specific receiving countries. Once the transfer corridor has been defined, users are provided with an overview of the money transfer operators functioning in that specific corridor with guidance to the fees incurred by each business, the exchange rate margin (the difference between the current interbank exchange rate and the exchange rate actually applied to the transfer, resulting in additional cost to the consumer), the total cost of the transfer (as a percentage of the total transfer and as a currency value), the transfer speed, and the network coverage. The information provided on the website is collected by a team of researchers who call or visit each provider selected for presentation on the site for information on fees and

⁸ It may be worth noting here that although the World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide website has—since its inception in 2007—attempted to provide a benchmark standard and unified methodology which independent websites should emulate, it was not the first website of its kind. The Send Money Home website, which will be discussed in more detail below, was initially developed in conjunction with the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) in 2005, and this initiative may be credited with inspiring the creation of many of the country-specific websites.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

exchange rates. To confirm that the information is accurate the researchers then conduct mystery shopping exercises in which they send a set amount of money to one of the countries monitored on the website. The mystery shopping exercises are conducted on the same day for all providers within the same corridor to account for fluctuations in the foreign exchange rate. The website monitors all providers with significant business in a corridor to ensure that 80 percent of the market in each corridor is assessed. For corridors with many small providers, this can involve significant coordination and manpower to assure that the mystery shopping exercises are conducted on the same day.

As noted in the comparison table above, the World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide website is updated periodically; since its launch in November 2008, the website has undergone three major updates (each approximately six months apart). Update frequency reflects the objectives of the website, one of which is to "...provide a benchmark proxy by which to measure improvements in transparency, efficiency, and competition within remittance corridors" (World Bank, 2010 <http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/About-Us/Rationale>). For this purpose it is not imperative for the website or comparison calculator to be updated on a more frequent basis. The choice to update the database approximately every six months also points to the intended audience of the website. While consumers could certainly benefit from using the website by observing general trends and behaviors of various remittance service providers within a given corridor, the volatility of exchange rates (and the changes in transfer fees that volatility implies) would make it more practical for consumers to consult services with more consistent updates. Rather than appealing to consumers directly, the World Bank website has been designed to provide better transparency in the remittance transfer market in an attempt to raise awareness about the costs of remitting, a process that would engage providers as well as individuals/organizations interested in pressuring providers to lower fees. The timeliness of updates and consumer orientation distinguishes 'Geld Naar Huis' from the World Bank website. While the World Bank website may, in some cases, provide a much more comprehensive assessment of major market players within specific corridors, it does not provide contemporary rate information that may be important to individual remitters. Further, 'Geld Naar Huis' provides a much larger list of recipient countries, and the language options available reinforce its use as a tool for remittance-senders.

It has been noted that the World Bank website and 'Geld Naar Huis' provide price estimates that are quite divergent for the same providers. Part of this can be attributed to the differences in the frequency of information updates—as the World Bank provides updates twice a year and 'Geld Naar Huis' attempts to update on a weekly basis, the information is bound to mismatch to at least some extent. Beyond this, price estimates may be different because the World Bank includes information such as the exchange rate margin which, when added to the fee, provides a more realistic assessment of the total costs associated with making a transfer. The World Bank also conducts mystery shopping exercises to confirm the costs of transfers, which allows for better idea of what fees actually are rather than simply what they are stated to be.

10.2.1 Mondato

The Mondato website is similar in functionality to the World Bank website; one of its primary features is a money transfer provider and service comparison calculator that covers a range of countries and corridors. The Mondato website is notably different from the World Bank website, however, in that information is updated frequently via automatic information retrieval systems, but the number of money transfer operators is extremely limited in certain corridors. The World Bank notes that it provides coverage of the money transfer providers through which sixty percent of all capital transferred within a given corridor flows. The Mondato website also attempts to provide the same degree of extensive coverage. The

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Mondato website is also geared to a different set of consumers than the World Bank website is; the website is divided into sections for consumers, businesses, and public sector actors. Part of Mondato's model has been to provide advisory services to money transfer providers or public sectors actors working on alternative finance initiatives. These services include advising about regulatory requirements within specific countries, providing guidance on business/product strategy and planning, providing statistical and analytical reports on remittance markets, etc. The website has also slowly grown to function as a demonstrative tool to showcase the variety of functions a remittance service comparison website could have for governments or other bodies wishing to develop their own comparison website. Given the different user groups the website is designed for as well as the business model pursued for financing in the website, the information retrieval process differs between the Mondato website and others profiled before. Unlike the World Bank and 'Geld Naar Huis' websites in which information is collected by individual researchers directly from the providers, the Mondato website provides information synchronization protocols with provider websites using Direct Connect APIs (application programming interfaces). These APIs enable automatic content and data sharing between the Mondato website and the website of providers where the information is first created, making this retrieval protocol extremely cost- and time-effective for both provider and website administrator. The disadvantage of this system is that it requires both parties to trust the security of the connection, and particularly among banks in which security is of tantamount importance, convincing providers to allow a direct open line of communication between websites can be difficult. Beyond that, this system also assumes that the information supplied by providers is accurate and not misleading. When asked about this element of the information retrieval protocol, a representative of Mondato noted that the risk of providers misrepresenting information is fairly minimal because of the fear that their reputations will suffer if the inaccuracies come to light. As Mondato regularly conducts mystery shopping exercises to check the accuracy of the fee and exchange rate information provided, providers have a genuine incentive to accurately report information lest they be identified as purposely misleading potential customers. When automated information systems are not in place, the information on the Mondato website is collected by manual consultation with providers.

The Mondato website provides interesting cues to the 'Geld Naar Huis' website regarding two distinct issues: information updating/timeliness and financial sustainability. The scope of the Mondato website is clearly much larger than that of 'Geld Naar Huis', and the amount of information that needs to be collected is also much larger, which makes the automatic information retrieval process so optimal. The Mondato website has oriented itself not only as an informational tool for consumers but as a marketing and visibility tool for providers. The cultivation of the website as dually benefiting both groups has perhaps made providers more willing to implement information-sharing protocols because the benefit of doing so is clear. The automated information retrieval coupled with the orientation of the Mondato website as a venture financially supported by fees charged to providers for the provision of services help contribute to the financial sustainability of the website. While neither the information-collection process nor the business model are necessarily replicable for 'Geld Naar Huis', it does suggest methods that can be employed in the future, particularly if 'Geld Naar Huis' wants to attain financial independence.

10.2.3 'Send Money Home'

The 'Send Money Home' website is the last of the non-sending-country-specific comparison websites that will be addressed here. As was mentioned prior, the Send Money Home website was launched in 2005 as an initiative of DFID, but it has since garnered a great deal of interest by moving away from its government-sponsored origins. Send Money Home provides essentially the same information as the World Bank and Mondato websites, including a

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

remittance provider comparison calculator that enables the user to choose both sending and destination country. The website claims to offer near-live rates (updated every 15 minutes), which are provided by RSS feeds (a format of web feeds that enables publication of frequently-updated information in a standardized way). Further information on the information-collection method used is not provided on the website. The website hosts a comparison calculator that provides a comprehensive overview of available providers by the organization, transfer type (cash-to-cash, account-to-account, pre-paid card, etc.), method (online, agent, branch, mobile, etc.), fee, exchange rate, speed, amount received, additional information, notes on the provider, and a direct link to the provider's online transfer page. It is this last element of the comparison calculator's results that truly distinguishes Send Money Home from most other websites.

In order to become financially sustainable, the Send Money Home website not only sells advertising space, but it also receives a small commission every time a user of the Send Money Home website completes a transaction with an individual provider after clicking through the link provided in the comparison calculator. This approach to generating income has meant that the Send Money Home website is now positioned to act both as a consumer advocacy tool and a valuable source of information and potential customers for businesses. This business model has helped ensure that the website remains financially sustainable, but it also implies that the website cannot attain certification by the World Bank because the website is partially supported by ad revenues from providers.

As with both the World Bank and Mondato websites, the methods of handling information and generating income used by this website can be useful for guiding the future development of 'Geld Naar Huis'. The Send Money Home website contains a massive amount of information, and as such its method of collecting information is more streamlined than that of 'Geld Naar Huis'. The use of RSS feeds to update foreign exchange rate information provides a cost-effective alternative that does not require providers to establish an open line of communication between their websites and the Send Money Home website. The choice to move away from government financing by collecting revenue from advertisement and pay-per-click schemes may also offer some cues to 'Geld Naar Huis', particularly as the website's share a similar inception story.

11. Financial Sustainability

11.1 Initial plan for financial sustainability

The initial plan to make the website financially sustainable was to become slowly independent of subsidies and external funding after the initial phase of the website development. The goal was to follow the English model of www.sendmonyhome.org in which market players eventually take over. As described, keeping the website up-to-date would be automatized as much as possible so that these costs would be diverted to the banks and MTOs that are present on the website. The costs for promotion and management of the website would be covered by the income from advertising on the website. For additional large-scale promotion activities, the website management would look for additional funding, if necessary.

11.2 Potential costs of the website

The future costs of the website depend on the choice for either a high or a low website profile. Currently a low profile is maintained in which the website is regularly updated and no other major activities, such as promotion campaigns or website innovations, are undertaken. Maintaining a low profile website will cost around €20,000 per year. This figure would mainly cover personnel expenses based on one person working eight hours a week. A low-profile website might not be sustainable in the future, however, for its success heavily depends on the number of visitors the website attracts. Without any frequent promotion campaigns, the number of visitors is not likely to increase.

If promotion campaigns are added to the activities, this will cost around an additional €40,000 per year. These costs include developing promotional materials, producing the promotional materials, and constructing the promotion campaign. A large promotion campaign, such as the one IntEnt launched in 2009, would cost between €50,000-60,000 a year.

For the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website to maintain a high profile, which includes regular updates of the website, regular promotion campaigns, and a focus on innovation, the total anticipated costs amount to between €100,000 and €150,000 a year. For the focus on innovation, in combination with regular website updates, the website’s management would require three to four full days a week. An overview of the low and high profile costs for the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website are provided in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Potential website costs: High versus low profile

	Low profile		High profile	
	Required	Costs (in Euro per year)	Required	Costs (in Euro per year)
Personnel (1 person)	1 to 2 days a week	20,000	3 to 4 days a week	40,000
Promotion	x	x	Development of prom. materials, prom. materials, design of prom. campaign	40,000
Innovation	x	x	Research and	20,000

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

			development	
Total costs per year		20,000		100,000

Source: Interviews with IntEnt management

11.3 Options for financial sustainability

Continuation of the website hinges upon financial support and sustainability, and it is this point that has been continuously highlighted by former and present IntEnt staff as a barrier to the website’s success. The website is not without its flaws, many of which can be eliminated with minimal financial investment, and none of them so fundamentally great that they would jeopardize the success of the website given a more certain financial future. While this evaluation can (and will) recommend improvements to the website, it must be stated that financing must be addressed before large corrections to website content or methodology can be made.

Based upon the cost models provided above by IntEnt staff, it can be surmised that the website cannot operate beyond the 2010 budget without additional funding. The amount and sources of funding will largely determine the evolution of the website, and IntEnt should carefully assess how its goals and objectives for the website can be matched by an appropriate business model.

On the broadest level, business models available for the website can be conceptualized along a continuum from exclusively-publicly financed to exclusively-privately financed. If the other remittance comparison websites can be used to exemplify this idea, than the Italian website ‘Manda Sol dia Casa’ could be oriented at one extreme: the website is financed exclusively by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it’s transparent funding process has contributed to its achievement of the World Bank certification.

On the opposite end of this continuum is private funding support; at its most extreme this business model could involve charging users of the website subscription fees or charging providers a fee for being listed (for example). While none of the comparison websites discussed prior have used such profit-generating methods, the Mondato website, which is funded entirely through profit-generating business advisory services, can serve as an example of how this business model can be put into practice.

In between the two ends of this spectrum lie business models involving combinations of public and private financing. It would be possible to orient the ‘Send Money Home’ website near to the middle. ‘Send Money Home’ has in the past been supported by the UK government through DFID, and it now receives financing through advertising and pay-per-click services.

The business models used by remittance comparison websites have some implications for the independence and objectivity of the website. If the World Bank certification is a goal IntEnt feels it should achieve, it would be difficult to do so without substantial public funding. While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to suggest what business model would best suit the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website and IntEnt, a few suggestions for financing have come up in the course of the evaluation.

If IntEnt would prefer to pursue public financing, the website could seek external funding through a government, an organization such as the World Bank, or some other grant-giving institution. Given recent economic difficulties, however, finding such funding could be a difficult process. The World Bank does not seem to be interested in financial contribution to

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the website, as evidenced by previous discussions between the World Bank and IntEnt management. The process of finding public financing is also time consuming, and personnel would need to be assigned to finding grant opportunities and pursuing them. With that said, this method of financing has its advantages and could provide a valuable solution. The German comparison website ‘GeldTransFAIR’ can provide an interesting cue in this regard. The website is a cooperative effort among the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management. The three institutions involved in the website bring unique expertise and advantages with them, and should IntEnt want to participate in a similar consortium to continue the website, more funding opportunities may be available (particularly if the website shifts focus to innovation in remittance methods and partners with a university). Further, as had been suggested during the round-the-table discussion, IntEnt could engage with other government bodies, such as the Ministry of Finance, in larger financial-awareness campaigns and initiatives.

If IntEnt would prefer to make the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website profitable, there are a number of changes that could be implemented to achieve this. From the round-table discussion held with providers, it seems as if there is a willingness to advertise on the website, and providers would (in principle) be receptive to a click payment system. The website would need to make sure it was up-to-date and should do more promotion to attract more users for these to become viable options, however.

Other options could include a private company model in which migrants are connected to the website through text messages (for example) and pay for the information they receive. This is a financial model in which the users pay for the service. Although this is an option, it is not one that we would recommend, as having to pay for the service could discourage users.

IntEnt could also consider coupling the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ initiative with some of its other business services, as the Mondato website has done. ‘Geld Naar Huis’ could conceivably be turned into a portal for business owners and entrepreneurs who want to establish money transfer businesses but need insight into the workings of the remittance markets in particular corridors before doing so. While this could potentially move IntEnt away from its core objectives and competencies, it would enable IntEnt to mobilize its considerable expertise in the field of migrant remittances and business development in a profit-generating venture linked directly to the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ initiative.

Financial sustainability is not merely a matter of securing financing, however, but it is also a matter of using financial resources efficiently. The information collection method currently used involves significant personnel cost and time, and streamlining the system could help contribute to financial resilience. To create an automated information retrieval system would be the best long-term solution, but it would require a significant investment in infrastructure and training at the beginning. Such automation could potentially be more cost effective in the long term, however, if it could reduce the time required of personnel to update provider information. The success of this method would also depend upon the willingness of banks and money transfer operators to participate in it, however, and inspiring the interest could prove to be a substantial stumbling block. An alternative method of reducing the time burden on IntEnt personnel would be to allow providers to update information themselves. Both of these methods carry with them certain risks and implications for World Bank certification and IntEnt will need to weigh all options carefully.

11.4 World Bank Certification and financial sustainability

The World Bank has formulated a set of twelve minimum requirements that must be met for any individual country database to receive the World Bank certification. While only one of these requirements directly addresses the sources of a website's financing (and thus implies how financial sustainability must be met), all of these minimum requirements have huge implications for the cost and time that must be dedicated to maintenance of the database.

The twelve minimum requirements are:

1. Double price points data gathering
2. Collection of fees for the sender
3. Collection of the exchange rate applied
4. Provision of total amount of the identified costs
5. Speed of the transaction
6. Type of service provided
7. Minimum of 60% of market coverage per corridor
8. Independence of the researchers
9. Validation through mystery shopping exercises
10. No advertisement policy
11. No subscription policy and clear funding process
12. Linkage with other WB-approved databases

The first requirement of double price points gathering requires that two different transfer amounts are sent from one provider to demonstrate progressive fee structures. In the case of the World Bank, these amounts are fixed at US\$200 and US\$500, but the recommendation is to choose data points that reflect the average transfer value within a corridor and the most frequently sent value within a corridor.

The second requirement asks that information is collected on the fees that the sender incurs at the time of transfer; this also implies a more thorough understanding of charging conventions that are applied to the transaction but which may not be apparent to the user of a service because they are incurred during the transfer process (such as fees incurred by banks using a network of cooperative banks).

The third requirement, collection of exchange rate information, requires researchers to understand the exchange rate applied when the transfer is paid out at the destination in another currency. These first few points then lead to the fourth requirement of reporting total identified costs, which includes fees, exchange rate margins, and any other costs incurred on either sending or receiving end.

The fifth requirement to report the speed of the transfer asks for the service speed to be noted, in standardized terminology provided by the World Bank. The type of service provided (sixth requirement) must also be reported in terms of the transfer method used, as the method has implications on the cost and speed of a transfer.

The seventh requirement demands that within any particular corridor, at least 60% of the market share should be represented by the providers profiled. The eighth requirement—that researchers retain independence—aims to ensure the individuals or institutions responsible for data collection are fully independent from the market industry of remittance service providers and will employ a transparent methodology.

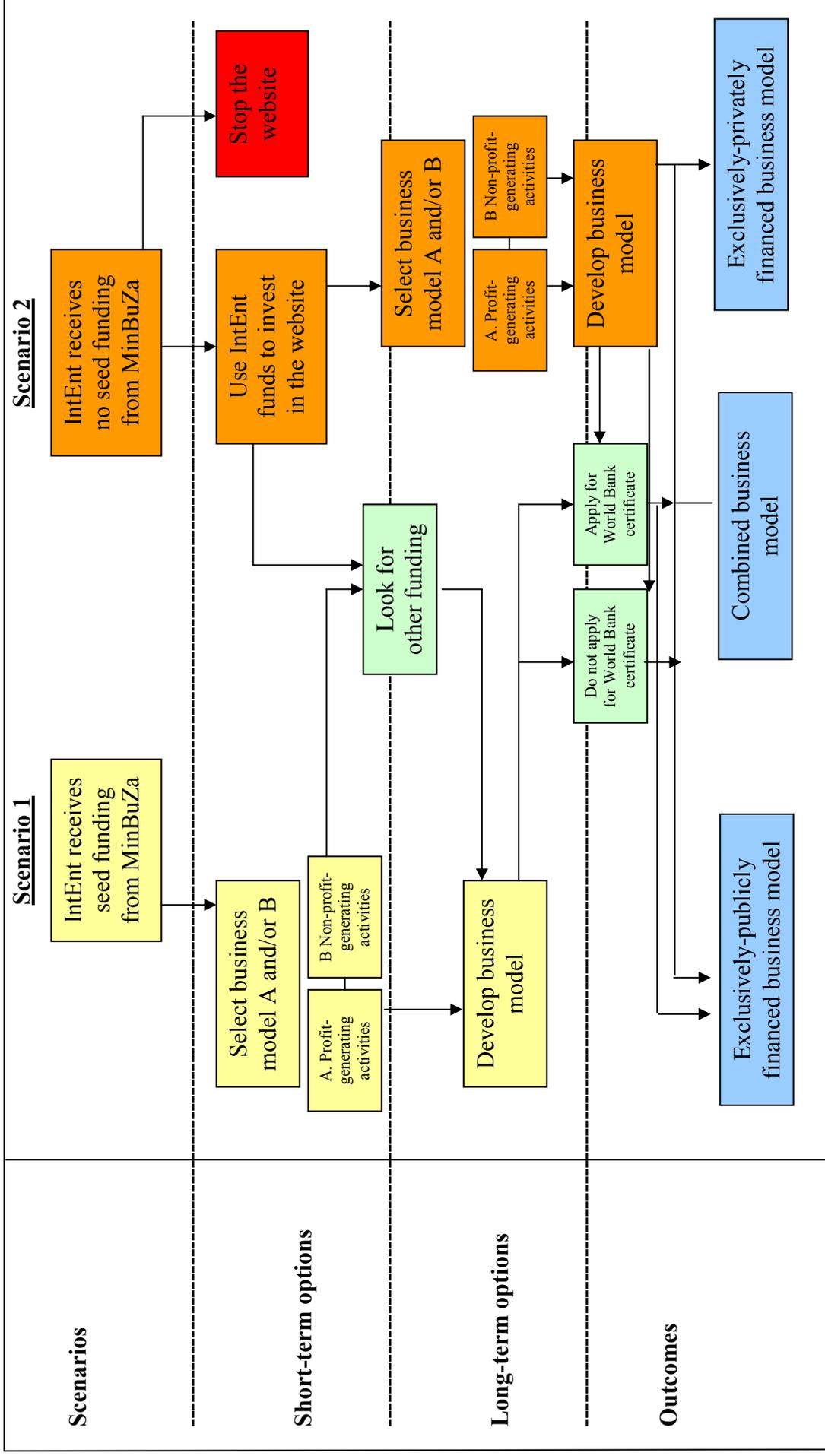
The ninth requirement to conduct mystery shopping exercises asks that researchers emulate the consumer shopping experience as much as possible to assess the transparency and accuracy of fee structures, the application of exchange rates, and similar aspects. The tenth requirement is that no remittance service providers assessed in the database should be allowed to advertise on the website, which helps maintain an appearance of impartiality and trustworthiness to users of these services. The eleventh requirement, which is to ensure a transparent funding process, also requires that the remittance service providers featured in the database are not required to pay for that representation, as this could bias the representation of services. The last requirement is simply that approved database should be linked to one another to promote increased usage of websites informed by the same standards.

There is a trade off between independence and the financial sustainability of the website. The real question here is if having the World Bank seal is worth not being able to tap into the private market for funds, and the answer depends entirely upon the perceived worth of the certification for IntEnt. The World Bank seal confirms that the website has used an appropriate and rigorous methodology, but it does not confer direct, concrete benefits to the website providers. The approach advocated by the World Bank helps ensure that the information provided is representative, unbiased, and accurate, all features that are essential for empowering remittance senders in choosing the most appropriate transfer method. The benefit for the user is clear, but if the website is not a government or government-funded initiative, it becomes much more difficult to commit a budget to upholding this quality standard for the provider. The provider may benefit from having the certification by being better endorsed and recognized by the World Bank, and this in turn may make it easier for IntEnt to secure future funding from public sources. This may not be enough to ensure that the website survives immediate funding concerns, however, and IntEnt must thus consider how the certification increases the website's value for their own purposes. It should also be considered that the certification is a goal that IntEnt can work towards after achieving better short-term financial stability, and in the meanwhile it can adopt any configuration of funding measures to ensure that the website can function.

Based on the options for financial sustainability and funding outlined above, as well as the discussion of the World Bank certification, IntEnt can (and must) choose an appropriate strategy for the website's continuation that best meets their vision for the website's future. Depending on whether or not MinBuZa chooses to provide continued (short-term) funding for the website, there are two conceivable scenarios that IntEnt will face in deciding on an appropriate action plan for the continuation of 'Geld Naar Huis'. The following figure provides a graphical representation of the business model options available to IntEnt based upon funding scenarios, short- and long-term financing options, and the choice to apply for the World Bank certification.

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Financial sustainability options



12. The Way Forward: Challenges and Recommendations

12.1 Recommendations

1. History and development of the website

While the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was initially conceived in 2006, it has undergone three phases of development, the last of which was a relaunch in 2009. For all practical purposes, the relaunch in 2009 can be seen as the beginning of the core website. In this sense the website is still fairly young and may need time to mature, especially when considering that it has been subject to continuously-changing management. The way forward in this respect would be to have a clear aim and vision for the website and to maintain steady management.

2. Current management and costs of ‘Geld Naar Huis’

The current composition of the website management is less than desirable. One person is charged with the task of working on the website for the equivalent of one day per week; eight hours a week is barely sufficient to retrieve information from providers and allows for very little innovation and only minimal maintenance. This structure can contribute to the website being out of date. The people involved in the website, however, are very motivated to make the website a success, and are very much capable of running a successful website. The core of the problem is in allocation of time and duties within a very limited budget.

Changes to IntEnt’s internal organization could potentially further stabilize the website and secure its financial future. IntEnt provides potential entrepreneurs with a range of advisory and support services that can help migrants realize a functional, realistic business plan. The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ initiative may seem distant from IntEnt’s focus on the stimulation of entrepreneurship and investment among migrants, but the relationship between the two could be quite robust. While the promotion of transparency within the remittance market has a clear link to the stimulation of investment and business development in migrants’ countries of origin, the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website does not necessarily make this link clear. While several other remittance comparison websites provide in-depth information on the link between remittances and development (through microfinance initiatives, co-development projects, support of NGOs, etc.), this information is fully absent from the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ site. As IntEnt’s core interest and competency is in the support of migrant entrepreneurship, this absence seems particularly odd. If one of IntEnt’s objectives in creating the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website was to attract new business to IntEnt, it would seem clear that promotion of IntEnt’s other activities on the website would be a good first step to achieving this objective.

The absence of information on the potential use of remittances to fuel investment and business development may reflect that the website is not well embedded in IntEnt’s general business and programming. ‘Geld Naar Huis’ seems to be treated as a stand-alone initiative that has been designated as relevant to only one staff member. This arrangement certainly reflects IntEnt’s financial constraints, but the lack of linkages between ‘Geld Naar Huis’ and IntEnt’s core programming could limit the success of the website.

It is clear that the website is not necessarily one of IntEnt’s top priorities because of its current inability to generate profit. For the website to become profitable, however, significant investments need to be made in it. If IntEnt chooses to invest in the website to make it profitable in the future, it is clear that the website needs to be better integrated into IntEnt’s business. Promotion of ownership of the website within IntEnt would be advisable, as would be linking the website to IntEnt’s other initiatives. One way to do this would be to encourage

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

the development of money transfer business among migrant entrepreneurs. Another option would be to engage potential advertisers on the 'Geld Naar Huis' website with the support of businesses developed with help from IntEnt (an option that may not be as difficult as it first seems as small and medium enterprise support provides a convenient outlet for many companies' corporate-social responsibility obligations).

3. Services offered by 'Geld Naar Huis'

When measured against comparable websites, 'Geld Naar Huis' does reasonably well. It has a high level of coverage in a number of countries and is generally more up-to-date than other websites. It does, however, lack the robust comparison of some of the other more detailed websites like that of the World Bank and 'Send Money Home'. The comparisons could be made more complete by following the World Bank guidelines and incorporating additional aspects of comparison (such as the exchange rate margin) into the comparison calculator.

To increase its value as a Dutch-market specific comparison tool, the website should offer additional information and services to users. It would be advised to include more information on innovations in the remittance market, deals and specials offered by money transfer operators, news about remittances in specific corridors, articles or resources for investing in home countries, information on remittances for use in development initiatives, etc. This information could also be offered in the newsletter, which would help raise the visibility of the website.

The website could also increase its functionality by including more countries in the comparison calculator; this could be based on CBS data on migrant groups with a population of over 10,000 or more. In line with this, the website (as a whole or in part) could be offered in more languages.

4. Usage and user-friendliness of the website

While the website is generally user-friendly, it could benefit from a few improvements, and the website's usage could be improved with the addition of features. The focus group provided interesting insights into possible innovations. One suggestion was that possible pick-up locations could be included in the comparison calculator to better express accessibility to the service; another suggestion was to provide an explanation of provider-specific security protocols and documentation requirements. Members of the focus group also discussed the merits of offering a discussion forum or blog on the website where users could post messages and receive feedback from the website administrators about experiences with specific providers, about specific questions regarding the best remittance service, and about the website's offerings in general.

In terms of user-friendliness, the website could categorize information more clearly and make language-change options more clear. In addition, as members of the round-table discussion suggested, the website's interface could be updated and modernized to make it more interactive, polished, and specific to financial services.

5. Cooperation with banks and MTOs

There is clear room for improvement in terms of engaging banks and MTOs in the website. While the relationship between 'Geld Naar Huis' and financial service providers cannot be characterized as negative, some financial service providers have expressed reservations about the value of the website for their own businesses. As migrant remittances are not that meaningful for banks, 'Geld Naar Huis' should consider alternate benefits to offer banks for participating in the website or should consider other synergies that could be developed between banks and IntEnt as a whole. Cooperation with MTOs could be better encouraged by demonstrating the link between presence on the website and increased customer flows. This could be done by promoting the website at MTO points of sale, for instance.

Cooperation between financial service providers and ‘Geld Naar Huis’ could be better fostered by raising the visibility and legitimacy of the website. As the concern has been raised that the website is not reaching its target group and is not connected to larger initiatives, one immediate step that could be taken is to connect the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website to other high-profile financial initiatives.

6. Effectiveness of the website

By far the weakest point in this evaluation is the effectiveness of the website. There is a clear lack of use of the website, which is mainly due to the fact that migrants are unaware of the website’s existence. We repeatedly found that the website was unknown to exactly the target group that should be using it. There was a spike in the number of users after the launch and large marketing campaign in 2009, but then the numbers dropped off again and there was no sustained marketing strategy. There are many low-cost solutions that could be regularly used that are currently not being employed. For instance, the website should be promoted in many of the activities and events in which IntEnt participates anyway. The research team visited several functions during the evaluation period where it would have been sensible for IntEnt to promote the website, yet even if when IntEnt was clearly visible, no promotional materials on the website were provided.

While the premise of the website may be a good one, and may indeed encourage more transparency in the market, the overall limited level of familiarity with the website suggests that the management team behind the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website should consider additional means of raising awareness of the website. Website usage by remittance-senders correlates directly to the amount of time and money providers are willing to invest in the website; increasing the visibility of the website among users thus also encourages contributions from providers.

Throughout the focus group and round-the-table discussion, participants stressed the need to advertise the website across different venues. The primary conclusion that emerged from the focus group discussion is that the potential of ‘Geld Naar Huis’ to ease the selection of money transfer services is great, but due to lack of visibility the website is not meeting its target group. Participants in the discussion suggested that the website be more aggressively promoted in migrant-specific venues. Participants suggested that promotion could take place via sponsorship of events conducted by migrant and diaspora organizations, participation in migrant events and activities, advertising at migrant organization meetings, billboards in migrant neighborhoods, and banners on a wide range of migrant-oriented websites.

7. Objectives of ‘Geld Naar Huis’

The objectives of the website are meaningful and valuable, but because of poor marketing and under-funding, many of the objectives are not being met. The website has not reached its goal of attracting a significant number of users, and it is not clear if migrants in the Netherlands have gained a better understanding of the various costs and methods of money transfers. The website has probably succeeded in making the remittances-sending market in the Netherlands more transparent to some extent by providing migrants an overview of the characteristics of different remittances channels for different countries, but much more can be done in this regard.

8. Sustainability of the website

Sustainability of the website is a clear concern. Right now, it does not seem possible for the website to continue without intervention from an outside funding source, at least until a proper infrastructure can be established to make the site sustainable in the future. Alternative funding structures are mentioned above, but in general it can be suggested that allowing key market players to advertise on the website and to include the website in a larger project that

gives it more exposure would increase the website's sustainability.

9. Possible Services: Lessons from other comparison websites

The evaluation of the website against other remittance service comparison websites has provided some insight into the services that the 'Geld Naar Huis' website could offer as well as suggestions of how information can be more efficiently retrieved. As many of these insights have been discussed in detail in previous sections, they will not be discussed at length here. A brief list will be provided, however, to summarize the positive aspects of other remittance-comparison websites that could be adopted by 'Geld Naar Huis':

- Mystery shopping exercises should be conducted on a large scale to confirm the accuracy of information on fees, exchange rates, and transfer times given by providers. Information can then be provided on the number of lost transfers and features of providers relating to customer service (such as dispute resolution) as well as on hidden fees incurred on the recipient's side⁹.
- The exchange rate margin should be provided to highlight the profit money transfer providers stand to gain via foreign exchange rates. Foreign exchange rates could be provided in real time via RSS feeds, thus simplifying this calculation.
- More providers should be profiled to ensure maximal corridor coverage. This can be done by checking the money transfer operators registered with the Dutch National Bank.
- Providers that are not specific to the corridor should be included, particularly as they provide transfer mechanisms that may not be as common with the other providers on the website. Such providers include Moneybookers.com and iKobo, which involve internet account-to-account/account-to-cash/account-to-card transfer.
- The comparison calculator should include more information fields such as the transfer mechanisms offered, differences in fees for different mechanisms offered by the same provider, and guidance for the type of documents needed to both send and pick up transfers.
- A glossary of terms could be provided to give users an easy-to-use, quick reference guide to financial services and their features.
- Logos of providers should be used to make the website appear more legitimate and more specific to financial products.
- To ease information collection, the website could provide login credentials to providers to update their own information. Alternately, automated information retrieval protocols could be built in to the website to ensure the exchange of up-to-date information.

12.2 Proposed action plan

The most important activities that IntEnt could undertake on a short-term basis to make the website more stable and effective are summarized in the following action plan (see Figure 1). This action plan includes objectives that can be realized with the limited funding that is currently available.

⁹ This would also be a good method to employ to combat bad press. Following an article in the *NRC Handelsblad* reporting that the 'Geld Naar Huis' website provided inaccurate information of transferring money to Suriname on 9 out of 10 occasions, blog posts such as the one found here (<http://www.mibari.com/wordpress/2009/09/10/site-geldnaarhuis-nl-blundert-met-90-foute-resultaten-suriname/>) further promoted the view of the website as being poorly researched.

Figure 1: Short-term action plan for IntEnt

- 1. Create a clear vision for the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website**

Creating a clear vision for the website includes setting concrete goals for both the short-term and the long-term. In addition choices have to be made—partly based on the outcomes of this report—on how to continue in terms of business model and financial sustainability.
- 2. Embed the website into IntEnt’s organizational structure**

Embedding the website into IntEnt’s organizational structure can be achieved by linking the website to already existing activities or projects within IntEnt. This will strengthen the underlying structure of the website and the organizational support for the website within IntEnt, which will facilitate promotion activities and enhance visibility of the website among migrants in the Netherlands.
- 3. Update and modernize the website**

The website should be updated and should provide more complete information by following the World Bank guidelines and adding exchange rate margins, more countries, and more providers to the comparison calculator.
- 4. Expand the services of the website**

The services the website offers to migrants in the Netherlands could be expanded; the website could become a portal for information on remittance transfers, news on remittances, and more country-specific information. This will attract more users and will increase customer-binding.
- 5. Create a concrete plan to engage banks and MTOs**

To engage banks and MTOs the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management should formulate a concrete strategy that includes a practical guide on how to facilitate information transfers and other synergies that could be developed between IntEnt and banks and MTOs. Within this strategy the benefits for the banks and MTOs must be clearly demonstrated.
- 6. Create alliances with other government bodies, financial institutions, or educational institutions**

The ‘Geld Naar Huis’ could be made more stable by IntEnt fostering cooperation with other government bodies such as the Dutch Ministry of Finance, financial institutions such as the Dutch National Bank, or educational institutions such as universities. This way the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ website can become more institutionalized and could be supported by a larger organizational structure.

13. Conclusion

This report provided an evaluation of the Dutch remittance service comparison website ‘Geld Naar Huis’, which has been managed by IntEnt. The evaluation was conducted by the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance between June and October 2010 in response to a request by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This report has shown that four years after the launch of ‘Geld Naar Huis’, the website has been struggling to reach its goals of increasing transparency in the Dutch remittance market by providing remittance senders information on the financial transfer opportunities in the Netherlands. The goal of attracting a minimum of 300,000 users a year has not been reached, which demonstrates that ‘Geld Naar Huis’ has attained limited visibility among its target group. If the website is to be continued—which would be beneficial and valuable to migrants—it must be done in a consistent manner. As one of the greatest challenges so far has been lack of visibility, the website must reach the public better.

The authors see the existence of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ as a valuable contribution to the Dutch remittance market and think that the website could be a success given that the most pressing issues are addressed. This trust in the potential of the website stems from the successful examples of other remittance comparison websites in different countries, the need for a remittance comparison website in the Dutch market as indicated by remittance senders, and the motivation of the ‘Geld Naar Huis’ management.

The most important inhibiting factor for the continuation of the website, however, is the future funding of ‘Geld Naar Huis’. It is imperative for the website management to formulate a clear focus, action plan, and timeline, with money given for the website for another year or two of operations. Within this year the focus should be on capacity building to bring the website to a point where it can be financially sustainable. We would suggest a mixed ‘Send Money Home’/ ‘Mondato’ funding approach after that year in which RSS feeds, automated information retrieval protocols, and advertisements all contribute to a more efficient website design.

We believe that certain areas are key for the running of an efficient and effective website. IntEnt must have a regular and targeted marketing strategy to reach their intended public, as they have achieved only 10% of their goal for visitations. This marketing strategy can be aided by a clear focus that is embedded in other IntEnt strategies. A clearer plan to incorporate banks and money transfer operators that makes it easier for banks to contribute to the website is needed. We suggest making agreements directly with the NVB. The website needs to be backed by more hard government players like De Nederlandse Bank and the Ministry of Finance to give it more weight. Finally, it is imperative that the capacity of IntEnt is increased to be able to carry out an effective website.

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Appendix 1: Electronic Survey (English Version)

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE USERS

1. Are you male or female?

1. Male
2. Female

2. How old are you?

_____ years old

3. What is the highest level of education you have obtained (finished)?

1. No formal education
2. Primary education
3. Lower secondary education
4. Vocational/pre-vocational upper secondary education
5. Upper secondary and/or non-tertiary post-secondary
6. Vocational tertiary
7. Theoretically oriented tertiary and post-graduate education

REMITTANCES SENDING

4. How often do you send money to family or friends living abroad?

1. Several times per month
2. Once a month
3. Once every two months
4. Once every three months
5. Once every six months
6. Once a year
7. Other (specify): _____

5. What channel do you mainly use to send money to family or friends living abroad?

List the top 3 remittances channels

1. I bring it myself when I visit them
2. I ask a friend or a family member to bring it to my family or friends
3. I use a money transfer operator (e.g. Western Union, Money Gram, etc.)
4. I go to a shop keeper, call house, or a hawala agent
5. I send it through a bank account
6. I transfer money via a stored value card (bank card or phone card)
7. Other (specify): _____

6. What country do you mainly send remittances to?

List the top 3 countries that you send remittances to, if applicable

1. Afghanistan
2. Bosnia Herzegovina

3. Brazil
4. Bulgaria
5. China
6. Colombia
7. Dominican Republic
8. Democratic Republic of Congo
9. Egypt
10. Ecuador
11. Ethiopia
12. Ghana
13. Hungary
14. India
15. Indonesia
16. Iraqi
17. Iran
18. Cape Verde
19. Croatia
20. Macedonia
21. Morocco
22. Moldavia
23. Dutch Antilles
24. Nigeria
25. Pakistan
26. Philippines
27. Poland
28. Romania
29. Serbia
30. Sierra Leone
31. Somalia
32. Surinam
33. Turkey
34. Vietnam
35. Other (specify): _____

USAGE OF THE WEBSITE

7. When did you consult the website for the first time?

1. Less than 3 months ago
2. Between 3 and 6 months ago
3. About one year ago
4. About two years ago
5. About three years ago

8. How often do you consult the website for prices of money transfers?

1. Several times per month
2. Once a month
3. Once every two months
4. Once every three months
5. Once every six months
6. Once a year
7. Other (specify): _____

9. In what language do you mainly compare prices on the website?

1. Dutch
2. English
3. French
4. German
5. Spanish
6. Portuguese
7. Turkish
8. Arabic

10. How did you learn about the Geld Naar Huis website?

1. Internet search (e.g. Google)
2. I read about it on a website
3. Through family or friends
4. Promotion at a festival or other social/cultural gathering
5. On the radio/TV/newspaper
6. Through an (migrant) organization
7. Through a bank
8. Through a money transfer organization
9. Other (specify): _____

USER-FRIENDLINESS OF THE WEBSITE

11. How satisfied are you with the information the website provides you?

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Not satisfied/not unsatisfied (neutral)
4. Unsatisfied
5. Very unsatisfied

12. Why are you satisfied or unsatisfied with the information the website provides?

13. In your opinion, how up-to-date is the website?

1. The website is very up-to-date
2. The website is up-to-date
3. The website is not up-to-date/not *not* up-to-date (neutral)
4. The website is not up-to-date
5. The website is not up-to-date at all

14. In your opinion, how often is the information the website provides on money transfer prices correct?

1. The information is always correct
2. The information is almost always correct

3. The information is sometimes correct
4. The information is almost never correct
5. The information is never correct

15. How user-friendly would you say this website is?

1. The website is very user-friendly
2. The website is user-friendly
3. The website is not user-friendly/not *not* user-friendly (neutral)
4. The website is not user-friendly
5. The website is not user-friendly at all

16. On a scale from 1 to 10, how happy are you with the service this website provides you?

1. (not happy at all)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. (very happy)

17. In your opinion, how could the website improve its services?

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WEBSITE

18. In your experience, have the costs of money transfers decreased since you started using this website?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

19. Are you subscribed to the Geld Naar Huis newsletter ?

1. Yes
2. No

20. If no, would you like to be subscribed to the newsletter?

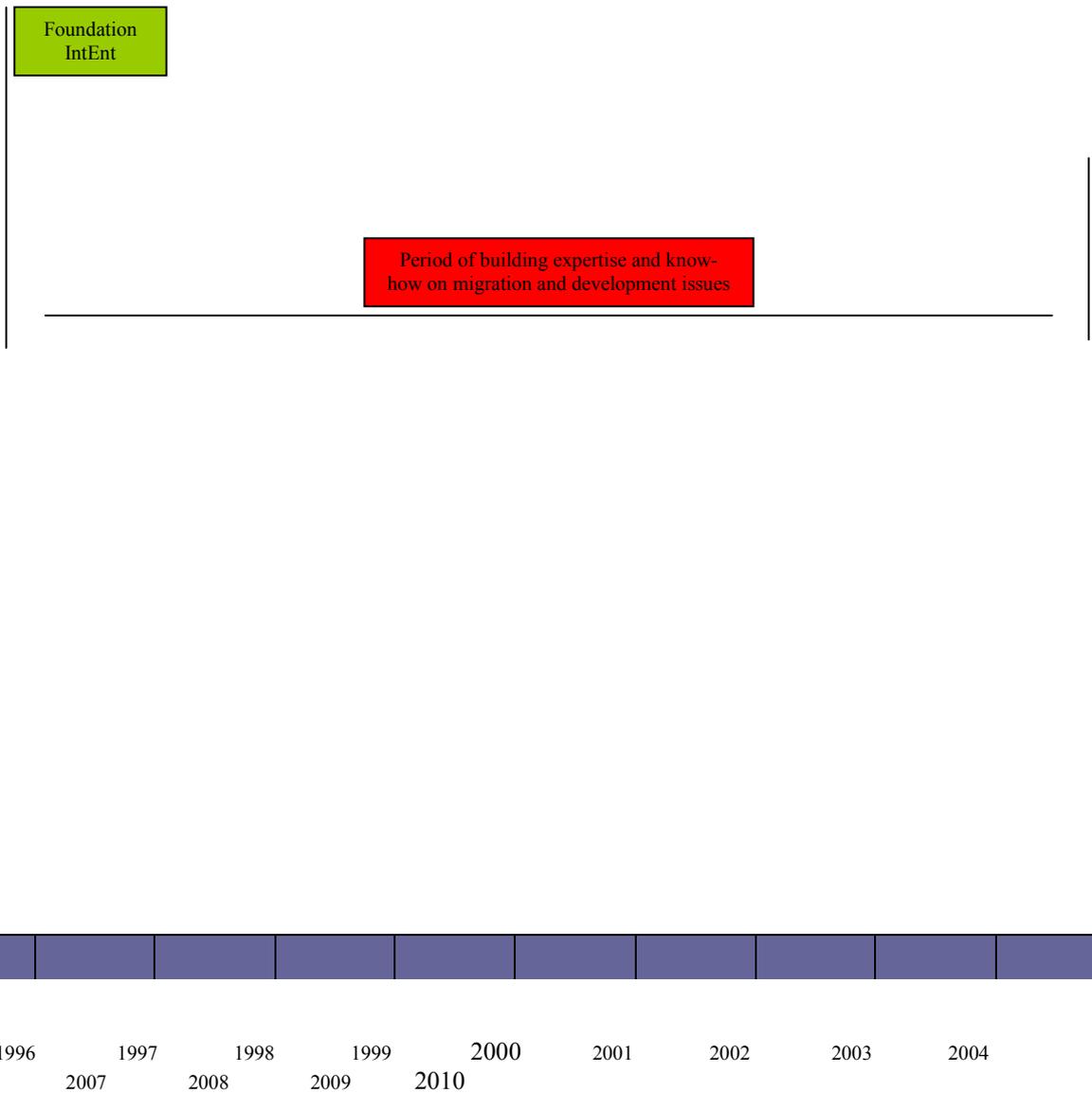
1. Yes
2. No

- 3. I don't know
- 4. Not applicable

21. What kind of information would you like to get from the website's newsletter?

22. Do you have any other comments?

Appendix 2: Historic overview 'Geld Naar Huis'



Appendix 3: Interview guide round table

Providers round table interview guide:

- I. Do you see remittances as a valuable area for your business?
- II. Have there been any changes in money flows over the last 5-10 years?
- III. What is the usefulness of website and functionality of the website for your business? Why?
- IV. Why have you chosen to be on the website, if you are posted there?
- V. What would make the website more functional for them?
- VI. What interest do you have in advertising on the website? What would make you want to advertise? More users?
- VII. Is there any interest in adding links to the current site so that people can make transactions directly? Would banks pay per click? What are ideas about transaction costs?
- VIII. What the perception of scratching and linking rates automatically between websites? What incentives would you need?
- IX. Other suggestions

Appendix 4: Focus group guide

User Group focus group guide:

1. Are you aware of the 'geld naar huis' website? Do you use the 'geld naar website'? What is the reputation of the website? Is it well known? Do you think it is useful?
2. Have migrants gained better understanding of various costs and methods of money transfers in the last five or ten years in the Netherlands? Do you think this has anything to do with the remittances website?
3. Do you think there has been a shift of transfers to formal channels? If yes, why? If no, why?
4. Do migrants make more use of formal transfers now for money transfer?
5. Are there features you wish you had on the website?
6. What info would you like to have in the news letter of the website?
7. Any other recommendations or comments?

Appendix 5: Websites comparison

European-specific Websites				
Website	Countries Covered	Navigation Languages	Information provided	User Friendliness
Geld Naar Huis (the Netherlands)	34	Dutch and English; comparison calculator in Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Arabic.	Provider comparison calculator; tips; providers; newsletter sign-up; links to other websites	Pros: Information is generic and made applicable for both MTOs and banks; navigation & headings are logical; the comparison tool provides good selection of criteria for determining best provider; information is presented in a clear and logical way Cons: Confusing language-change interface; inconsistent availability of information in different languages
GeldtransFAIR (Germany) ¹⁰	33	Website navigation in German only; brief PDF-document summaries in Albanian, Arabic, English, French, Serbian, Turkish, and Vietnamese.	Provider comparison calculator; tips and suggestions for choosing providers; forum; news articles; links to other websites	Pros: Large variety of information, both from website provider and from other users; the comparison calculator is intuitive and comprehensive Cons: Navigation language is German only
Envoi d'argent ¹¹ (France/ Francophone region)	21	French native interface only; links to Google translate in English, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian	Provider comparison calculator; in-depth information on providers; in-depth information on use and function of remittances; detailed overview of co-development associations and projects by country; news articles; links to literature and other websites	Pros: Large volume of comprehensive information that explores the development potential of remittances; easy to use and informative comparison calculator; detailed information on providers Cons: Site is difficult to navigate because of multiplicity of sections, sub-sections, and menus; interface is cluttered; volume of information can seem overwhelming; translation via external tool can lead to confusing headings and incomplete/mis-translations
Dupla Oportunidade (Portugal) ¹²	3	Portuguese	Information on migration and development in general, with some focus on diaspora relations and remittances; tables describing remittance transfer methods for three specific recipient countries (formulated in 2007); links to migration, development, and remittance sites	Pros: Website is fairly simple, and information is organized efficiently. Cons: While there is some guide for remittance service provider comparison, this is not the focus of the website; information is outdated; finding information on remittances is somewhat difficult because of the number of steps it takes to reach the remittance service section
Remesas.org (Spain) ¹³	Various	Spanish	Information on remittance use and	Pros: A wide variety of information on the remittance

¹⁰ <http://www.geldtransfair.de/>

¹¹ <http://www.voidargent.fr/>

¹² <http://www.duplaoportunidade.org/>

¹³ <http://www.remesas.org/>

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			impact on development; statistical information, reports, and evaluations about features of the remittance market in Spain	market in Spain is provided. Cons: The website is more research oriented than consumer oriented and does not provide a convenient or easily-accessed comparison tool; the interface is difficult to navigate; information is not organized into adequate subsections
Sende Penger (Norway) ¹⁴	12	English	Information on how different money transfer channels affect the development potential of remittances; information on different transfer mechanisms; comparison of services by specific corridor with guidance on requirements for both sender and recipient; link to market survey report	Pros: Easy to use and navigate interface with clear organization of information; detailed information for particular destination countries Cons: The website reflects the results of a 2007 market survey report, and its contents are not kept up-to-date; very few countries are represented; the comparison of services lacks some detail (such as information on fee structures)
Manda sol dia Casa (Italy) ¹⁵	14	Italian and English	Provider comparison calculator; information on transfer channels, methods, and types of providers; information on costs; listing of migrant initiatives; glossary of relevant terms; general financial information; links to other websites	Pros: The interface is easy to navigate and streamlined; the interactive country map eases access to information; information is well categorized; information is simply presented yet fairly in-depth Cons: Detailed information on the providers is not given, despite the user's ability to click on providers when comparing services; even though the website is offered fully in Italian and English, parts of the service provider comparison table remain in Italian even when the English interface is used
Money Move ¹⁶	22	English	Provider comparison calculator; newsletter and news service (with some corridor specificity); publication and report archive; currency exchange rate calculator; help and FAQ, with guidance to important considerations when choosing transfer channels; links to diaspora community websites, other remittance comparison sites, and diplomatic missions	Pros: Wide range of service providers included in calculator; inclusion of detailed contact information for providers; calculator includes important notes on features of the service (such as when fees will differ from the standard or quoted rate) Cons: Transfer calculator features sometimes ill-defined categories (ex: both electronic and online transfer mechanisms, without explanation of the distinction between them) and inclusion of two types of information under one heading; calculator does not provide quoted exchange rates per service
International Websites				
<i>Website</i>	<i>Countries Covered</i>	<i>Navigation</i>	<i>Information provided</i>	<i>Timeliness of Information</i>

¹⁴ <http://www.sendepenger.no/>
¹⁵ <http://www.mandasoldiacasa.it/>
¹⁶ <http://www.moneymove.org/>

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<i>Languages</i>				
Send Money Home (developed in the United Kingdom but not specific to UK)	69 (same list of sending/receiving countries)	English	Provider comparison calculator; detailed information on types of providers and services; guide to frequently-asked-questions and advice; tools for monitoring currency conversion/exchange rates; news articles; country-specific remittance channel information; guide to corporate transfers	Rates are updated every 15 minutes (for most providers); new providers are added on a regular basis
World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide ¹⁷	24 sending countries; up to 25 receiving countries (from the UK); 8 receiving countries for transfers from the Netherlands	English	Provider comparison calculator; explanation of methodology employed to collect data on service providers; description of national and regional databases (with guidance to certification requirements); remittance resources (such as links to national databases, literature, news items, etc.)	Information is updated on a (mostly) biannual basis
Mondato (Search Portal for Value Transfer) ¹⁸	13 sending countries; 36 receiving countries		Provider comparison calculator; newflashes; information for money transfer providers (such as business advisory services, marketing services, data mining services, etc.); information for public sector actors (such as business advisory services, statistical information and other reports, regulatory advisory services, etc.)	Most information is updated on a daily basis via Direct Connect API protocols with providers; mystery shopping exercises are also conducted daily when possible.

¹⁷ <http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/>

¹⁸ <http://www.mondato.com/>