

HiLab – Usability Research Lab

HiLab is a Usability Research Lab within the Central and East European Center for Cognitive Science at the New Bulgarian University. It specialises in eye-tracking studies, registration and analysis of physiological signals, user testing, usability testing of web sites, print and video, as well as web-based and software testing.

HiLab uses a unique technology for Bulgaria – an eye-tracking system. User tests are done in specialised computer aided laboratories allowing video and audio recording. The academic environment makes it possible to use and develop modern methods that guarantee high quality analysis and reliable results.

Lecturers, students, experts in different fields such as cognitive sciences, psychology, marketing and advertising, and computer science work and collaborate in HiLab. Together with consultants and part-time researchers the laboratory has 10 people staff.

Since November 2008 HiLab is a founding member of the Digital Spaces Living Lab, Sofia, Bulgaria, which is a member of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL).

Products: • eye-tracker tests and studies; • various services including testing the usability of products, ads, software and web sites; • usability training.

Innovation: HiLab has developed a methodology for the development and implementation of e-learning systems and methods for testing the emotional impact when working with interfaces based on physiological signals.

Projects: HiLab has participated in the following major **international projects:**

- WELKOM (2004-2007) – this project aims to create effective systems for e-learning; it is funded by the EC, Leonardo Da Vinci Programme. HiLab was responsible for the development and implementation of a methodology for creating user-friendly e-learning systems. Partners: Turbomeca (SAFRAN group), VBS (Petrol Holding) and IStar training (France).
- EUROCOG (2003-2006) – this project is financed by the EC, 5th Framework Programme; HiLab was created within this project as part of the integration of the Central and East European Centre for Cognitive Science into the European Cognitive Science Research Area.
- RASCALLI (2005-2008) – a project, which is funded by the EC, 6th Framework Programme; HiLab has developed and applied a new methodology for studying the interaction with virtual intelligent agents and its emotional aspects. Partners: OFAI (Austria), DFKI (Germany), Radon labs и Ontotext lab (Sirma group).

Applied projects include testing the usability of : 1) NBU's own web site (<http://www.nbu.bg>); 2) the NBU Library web site (<http://lib.nbu.bg>); 3) the MOODLE e-learning system used by NBU; 4) the web site of the Kontiko accounting company; 5) the Big.bg web site (<http://big.bg>); 6) the Your Business on-line magazine (<http://www.tbmagazine.net>), etc.

Some scientific and research projects conducted by HiLab include "Internet advertising" and testing of HiLab's own brands.

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