1. ABSTRACT
From the analysis of users categories of the CNR web site, and of their information needs, the paper describes the design of a portal for the Italian scientific research more oriented toward an amply diversified utilization, rather than the strictly internal utilization, as has largely been the case until now.

2. INTRODUCTION
Within the process of restructuring the National Research Council (CNR) it was deemed necessary to redesign the website www.cnr.it, taking into account its two main functions:

1. Information for promoting the organization’s image:
   enhancement of its potential, objectives, results achieved and of their value both in cognitive terms and in relation to the system support;

2. Information addressed to the public:
   the user (the public, by no means a passive entity), with its increasing demand for information, areas of interest, and priorities, is placed at the center of the information process as protagonist. Around this hub, the sources of knowledge and information, the informative content itself, and the organization’s information channels revolve in a functional and coordinated way.

To this end, the new site’s prototype will be oriented as far as possible toward an amply diversified utilization, rather than the strictly internal utilization as has largely been the case until now. This obliges us not to rely on the use of classic and traditional communication standards and presentations, but to strive towards the realization of new systems, increasingly tailored to the users’ needs.

This work, beginning with a preliminary analysis of user categories and of their information needs, identifies the first phase of the design of a prototype of a portal for the Italian scientific research which best responds to the innate characteristics of the Internet: internationalization, accessibility, and usability [1,2].

3. IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF USER CATEGORIES AND THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
The work group, specifically constituted within the CNR framework, was charged with the task of both classifying the users who access the Web and analyzing their requests for information. The group has recognized four major categories of users of the CNR information structure, pertaining to the following areas [3], [6]:

- **Management**
  Users whose involvement concerns legislative, normative, and managerial decisions, mainly interested in “what to do” in the various sectors. They require complete but concise information, from which all implications of the intended strategies can be easily deduced. In this category, information requests predominantly derive from:

  *Governmental organizations (Ministries, parliamentary commissions, ministry commissions for: public works, environment, transportation, etc.)*
  *Local administrations (regional, provincial, city),*
  *Central and local technical-scientific services,*
- **Production**
  Users interested in knowing the potential application of results (i.e., processes, technologies, methods, products, etc.) in both scientific and productive terms and in determining all economic and normative implications. Within this category, the main requests for information come from:
  - Agriculture,
  - Industry small business,
  - Various professions (planners, industrial consultants, professional associations etc.).

- **Research and Education**
  Users desirous of increasing their own cultural and specialized knowledge. In this category the information requests arrive mainly from:
  - Universities,
  - Research organizations,
  - Primary and secondary schools,
  - Students and trainees,
  - Young people seeking their first employment.

- **Public Opinion**
  The so-called “public opinion” sector, requiring simple, brief and convincing information regarding scientific and technological progress as applied to various sectors (health, environment, transportation, etc.).

4. **ANALYSIS OF THE WEB SITES OF THE CNR RESEARCH STRUCTURES**

During an established period of time, the survey carried out by a special work group created within the CNR framework, examined the 220 websites of the CNR research structures present on the Web[4]. This survey was primarily conceived for the practical purpose of establishing an up-to-date information base, immediately available for preliminary evaluation of the state-of-the-art of the CNR websites. To this end, it was necessary to define a set of indicators representative of the quality of the websites, based on both the guidelines of the CNR Communication Plan [5] and on the necessity for increased external diffusion of information. The statistical survey provided a reference point for the identification of sites present on the CNR web, of their characteristics in terms of information and of services supplied. The sites evaluation was purposely conducted according to a content-oriented criteria, intentionally excluding some intrinsic characteristic of the Web such as navigation and efficiency of use.

5. **STUDY FOR A PROTOTYPE**

The second phase to be carried out consists in constructing a prototype for a new architecture of the site www.cnr.it. The technical realization of this project has been entrusted to the CNR Institute for Telematic Applications which has already initiated a study beginning with the web navigation and concentrating on a user-centered design. The identification of four major user categories of the CNR information structure emphasizes the need for designing a well-aimed and differentiated navigation method. The study being conducted proposes a navigation system capable of identifying and dynamically managing the links related to various levels of the site’s structure, based on an appropriate classification of the page contents established beforehand. At any point during the navigation, the user is aware of his position within the general structure of the website and of the pathway already followed, or to be followed, within his own category.

6. **REFERENCES**