

The Future started yesterday - 14 Questions concerning E – INCLUSION for SENIORS

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1) What is e-inclusion?

- E-inclusion is a social movement whose goal is to end the digital divide, a term used to describe the fact that the world can be divided into people who do and people who don't have access to - and the capability to use - modern information technology (IT).
- According to advocates, e-inclusion has the power to: close the gap between developed and less developed countries; promote democracy and mutual understanding; and empower disadvantaged individuals, such as seniors, the disabled, the poor and the unemployed.

2) What are the expected benefits?

- In the wake of the change from the industrial society to a modern, knowledge-based information society, information and communication technologies (ICT) have penetrated almost all areas of social and political life.
- Globalization itself has only been made possible by the rapid progress of ICT, which will continue to fuel its further development.
- ICT should help create more economic growth and more jobs, more independence and better chances in life and quite generally enhance solidarity within our society.

3) Why is it essential for the market to take care of the specific needs of the seniors concerning ICT?

- It is estimated that Europeans over 65 possess wealth and revenues of over €3,000 billion, thus representing a huge market potential.
- Despite the fact that the ageing population will soon constitute a mainstream market, its specific needs are not fully taken into account in the design of ICT products and services that still remain complicated to use and enjoy.

4) Why do we talk about a paradox phenomenon concerning ICT?

- The relationship between science and society today is something of a paradox.
- First of all, science and technology are at the heart of the economy and society, and both are having an increasingly positive effect on the lives of people in Europe...
- Conversely, advances in knowledge and technology are greeted with growing scepticism, even to the point of hostility, and the quest for knowledge no longer generates the unquestioning enthusiasm that it did some decades ago.

5) Why are contemporary societies described as “ageing societies”?

- Contemporary societies are only roughly described as “ageing societies” but the general trend is more complex.
- The number of people over 50 will rise by 35% between 2005 and 2050. The number of people over 85 will triple by 2050. Without a higher level of participation of the elder population in employment, and without better tailored and more effective health and social care services, these trends will put serious problems into the public awareness

6) Why is it necessary to distinguish between “Third and Fourth Age”?

- Two events characterise current ageing processes: the naissance of an extended middle age applying to the post-65 age group (which could be called the “**third age**”) and the creation of a “**fourth age**” (older senior citizens).
- Frailty not only undermines the quality of life, but also is a reliable predictor of a general decline in health, capacity of life in the community and personal autonomy. Consequently, the main goal of e-Inclusion in regard to older senior citizens should be containing frailty and promoting independent living.

7) Why did the EU Commission promote i2010?

- In connection with the mid-term evaluation of its i2010 initiative, the European Commission has stated quite clearly that, as far as the information society is concerned, Europe cannot afford a two-tier society.
- Neither economic nor social considerations could justify the acceptance of a situation where one part of the population possesses the necessary equipment and qualifications for participation in the information society – and another large part doesn't.
- Innovative concepts and solutions can and should be designed in order to ensure the e-Inclusion of people with a lower educational level and income, of senior citizens and of persons with special needs.

8) What did the EU states agree to in RIGA 2006

The EU states agreed to implement an e-Inclusion policy focusing on the following core themes:

- paying attention to the needs of senior citizens;
- reduction of digital divides due to geo-graphical factors;
- improvement of accessibility and avail-ability of ICT for people with disabilities;
- enhancement of digital skills in general;
- improvement of the online services offered by the public authorities;
- use of ICT to ensure everyone is included in the information society.

9) What is in particular important for the EU Commission?

- Including 30-40% of the population in ICT world
- ICT mainstreaming
- Saving costs and forcing a profitable economic sector
- Basic prerequisites: a broadband connection, non-discriminatory access to all websites and the necessary digital skills

10) What does “Digital divide” mean and why should it be overcome?

- The lack of access to ICT is limiting a person's chances of participating in social, economic and political life and may even lead to social marginalization.
- If the worst comes to the worst, we could be facing a (digital) divide between those who participate in the information and knowledge society via ICT and those who are excluded from it.
- Yet ICT can help senior citizens to lead an autonomous, secure, healthy and socially integrated life within their own four walls for as long as possible.
- The digital gap is highly impacted by factors related to age and levels of education,
- Closing the gap with providing technologies and solutions that particularly address the unique physical needs of senior citizens
- Seniors who may be less educated and uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the traditional desktop computing environment which has become the hallmark of current day ICT

11) What are the main solutions concerning independent living of seniors and what should seniors learn concerning the usage of ICT tools?

ICT Solutions address daily and independent living such as:

- Social communication: easy access to phone and video conversation, notably if enabled by broadband to stay in touch with family and friends, overcoming social isolation (in several countries over half of the 65+ are living alone)
- Daily shopping, travel, social life, public services: easy access over the internet to order goods online e.g. when reduced mobility makes physical shopping more difficult
- Safety (making sure entrance doors and windows are locked/closed when leaving the house or sleeping; checking for water or gas leaks; and turning all but one light off when going to bed, etc.)
- Reminders (memory problems tend to be associated to ageing and thus support may be needed in taking medication and fulfilling household tasks)

- User-friendly interfaces (for all sorts of equipment in the home and outside, taking into account that many elderly people have impairments in vision, hearing, mobility or dexterity)
- Telecare and telemedicine opens up new opportunities for providing medical care to the home and there are many new developments in ICT-based home care, including ways of monitoring wellbeing and providing a secure home environment
- Personal health systems include wearable and portable systems for monitoring and diagnosis, therapy, repairing/substitution of functionality and supporting treatment plans for individuals with a chronic disease – (e.g. heart disease and diabetes), complemented by telemonitoring and telecare, thus avoiding hospitalisation
- e-Government for everyone Administration cannot work without documents. For this reason, e-Government requires electronic documents.
- Support for people with cognitive problems and their carers to stay at home for longer and remain active for as long as possible, e.g. through cognitive training, reminders GPS tracking etc.
- Support for more efficient workflows in care, by integrating health and social care through sharing information, monitoring and follow-up to interventions across different organisational and physical boundaries.

12) What is needed to make the e-inclusion challenge a success?

- The Austrian web portal "Seniorkom.at" constitutes an attempt at making it easier for senior citizens to start using the Internet. Interesting offers, easy-to-use products and free training sessions are provided to help senior citizens overcome their threshold anxiety regarding computers.
- The main point to focus on is that older people who are no technophiles should be helped to overcome their awe of new technologies. However, manufacturers and providers continue to offer products and services that more or less ignore the needs of senior consumers.
- From an economic point of view, this is completely incomprehensible. If websites are not suitably designed, even the best software will be useless and it is a case of discrimination which could be dealt with at a national justice court.
- In cases where this lack of accessibility prevents a disabled person from taking advantage of the services offered by a provider, the person affected is entitled to defend himself/herself against such discrimination by initiating conciliation proceedings before the national court of justice.

13) Which specific interventions must be forced?

- Easy to understand interfaces
- Easy to handle hardware
- Easy to handle software (touch screens for fourth age)

- Broadband for everyone (financial allowance for low incomes)
- Assistance
- Courses

14) Which inventions will be a challenge for seniors?

- Reading pads
- Apps
- Public services eg. Post offices work with electronic delivery Trips to the post office to fetch registered letters could soon be a thing of the past entirely