

e-Ageing means...

empowering older people to participate fully in the economy and society, to continue independent lifestyles and to enhance their quality of life.

Updated March 2008

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for comment

GETTING TO WHERE WE ARE NOW

In 2006, an ad hoc expert group on ICT and ageing was established following the Riga Ministerial Declaration on e-Inclusion.

In 2007, the Commission set out to establish an innovation platform for ageing well in the Information Society. A ministerial debate under the Portuguese Presidency advanced EU policy on the use of ICT for active ageing at work and for digital competence among older workers.

Pilot projects were also launched as part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme with an initial focus on independent living and chronic disease monitoring. The programme runs until 2013. In addition, the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes each have strands addressing the issue of ICT and ageing.

In 2008, the e-Inclusion initiative is taking forward the concept of ICT for ageing. Special action has also been initiated for the collection of best practice data on practical applications of ICT-based solutions responding to the problems of ageing in society. A special template has been prepared for collecting data and draft country reports of best practice will be issued.

Citizen First fiches are published and maintained by the Mid-West Regional Authority of Ireland, mcollins@mwra.ie

Practitioners are invited to contribute experiences, news and comment to Citizen-First@mwra.ie

NEXT STEPS...

The template addresses three different markets for ICT-based products and services, linked to three distinct life situations – work, home and the community.

Recommendations will follow on the reduction of barriers and on reimbursement options in the field of ICT and ageing.

Ageing well at work...

Staying active and productive for longer, with better quality of life and work-life balance, supported by easy-to-access ICT, innovative practices for adaptable, flexible workplaces, and ICT skills and competence.

Ageing well in the community...

Staying socially active and creative, through ICT solutions for social networking as well as access to public and commercial services, thus improving quality of life and reducing social isolation.

Ageing well at home...

Enjoying a healthier and higher quality of daily life for longer assisted by technology, while maintaining a high degree of independence, autonomy and dignity.



ICT for ageing well – a social necessity and an economic opportunity

The Information Society can enable older people – when and where they wish to do so – to participate fully in society and the economy and to be active as empowered citizens.

At the same time, this generates opportunities for business and benefits for the economy and society

The challenges of ageing include the following main issues which are at the heart of the ICT for Ageing initiative:

Understanding elderly users

The substantial market for products and services for ICT and ageing is still at an early stage. Low market awareness and visibility, lack of standards and interoperability, and uncertainty about the sustainability of business models all constitute barriers to its development. Ethical issues and a general lack of co-ordination, user-industry co-operation and common strategies all delay its take-up. In addressing these barriers and grasping opportunities, elderly people as the eventual users must remain at the centre of concentration.

Market visibility and transparency

Lack of awareness among the European ICT industry, intermediaries and final users of technology is a key factor in why the market for ICT and ageing has so far been inadequately addressed.

Regulatory barriers

Similarly, lack of standards and conformity assessment procedures, and different application by Member States of the provisions related to disability have hindered progress. Differences in social and health care reimbursement schemes within Member States, together with uncertainties about the legal requirements of medical certification, have also hampered the development of existing and new services and technologies.

Technical barriers

Mainstream ICT products and services have rarely addressed the real and evolving needs of the elderly population.

Basic access barriers and lack of adequate solutions

Without access to communication networks (especially broadband), older people are at particular risk of missing the benefits of the Information Society. Without education and motivation, they cannot begin to reverse their prospect of exclusion. Without ethical safeguards, they could be denied the opportunities that others take for granted.

Citizen First for e-Inclusion wishes to stress that any work planned with elderly people must take account of current ethical and best practice. In the absence of professional advice, a database like ASSIA (Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts), accessible through any University library, will quickly identify the precautions which must be taken – for your own protection, for the protection of the participants themselves and for the success of the project.



Links:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/policy/ageing/launch/index_en.htm
<http://ipolicy.squarespace.com/ict-for-elderly-introduction/2007/3/12/ageing-well-in-the-information-society.html>

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