

Report on the

***Public Consultation on
e-Inclusion strategy***

**Document produced in support to the Impact Assessment of the
i2010 European e-Inclusion Initiative:
To be part of the Information Society**

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1. Executive summary

A public on-line consultation in support of the Communication announcing the i2010 European Initiative on e-Inclusion was launched on 11 June 2007 and has been closed on 15th August 2007. The questionnaire was made up of 12 questions on the different areas referred to in the Riga Ministerial Declaration. On-line responses at the end of the consultation were 211. Responses also came through off-line means such as position papers. The majority of answers (65%) came from individuals (mainly concentrated in the EU15). 35% of responses were from legal entities including NGOs representing users and industry, companies and research entities. The feedback on the following questions highlighted that:

- Limited progress has been recorded on e-Accessibility since the adoption of the 2005 Communication. The consultation highlighted the growing legal and market fragmentation in dealing with the e-Accessibility challenge (concerns respectively shared by 69% and 72% of respondents).
- The need to reinforce (81%) and revise (87%) current legislation as well as propose (72%) new legislation on e-Accessibility was strongly emphasised. The respondents also supported the need for accompanying instruments engaging stakeholders (such as the use of corporate social responsibility (68%), enhanced monitoring schemes (66%) and user-industry cooperation (61%). Also on web-accessibility, 53% of respondents suggested using mandatory standards that can be used in public procurement.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents also stated that enhancing e-Accessibility would have very positive impacts on individuals (90%), European industry (82%) and society overall (92%).
- Digital literacy should be strengthened according to 90% of responses by fostering public private partnerships in (82%) and encouraging efforts to promote standard qualifications (75%).
- Older people are discouraged to take up ICT tools and services because of existing technological barriers (53% of respondents) and the need to increase awareness of ICT potentials among the older population as well as enhancing competencies, accessibility and access to technologies (ranging from 65% to 76%). The majority of respondents also signalled the priority to adapt ICT to the needs of the older users.
- The potentials from the use of ICT tools and services are increasingly seen as an integrating factor for marginalised youth to engage socially and economically (61% of respondents) and for ethnic minorities (75%). Linking the e-Inclusion dimension to policies for education, employment and immigration was selected respectively by (43%), (32%) and (30%) as a top priority.
- The majority of respondents agreed (55%) and strongly agreed (15,9%) to recognise the potential of social web (web 2.0) for social inclusion, since web 2.0 allows services to be better tailored to users and users engage better in the information society.
- A strong plea was made to increase ICT competences in public service providers (84%).
- A strong claim was made for the need to increase mainstreaming of e-Inclusion across all policy-making (87% of respondents) while reinforcing international debate and exchange on e-Inclusion, promoting research and innovation activities and better coordinating local, national and EU levels.
- Respondents also strongly encouraged the EU (87%) to foster dialogue on e-Inclusion across relevant stakeholders and support industry efforts through corporate social responsibility (75%).
- 23 replies were also sent in off-line mode from civil society representations and business entities/organisations (5). This feedback sent in the form of direct replies to the off-line versions of the questionnaire or in the form of position papers differed from the on-line responses especially in terms of proposed options for e-Accessibility. Opinions ranged from supporting stronger legislative intervention (from the part of civil society organisations) to more reserved views voiced by the industry.

– The latter positions recognised that a common approach is needed at EU level given the current fragmentation of the e-Accessibility landscape in Europe due to diverging requirements at Member State level. However, feedback from some industrial entities called for pursuing non-regulatory solutions or implementation procedures relying on self-certification of products and services, the use of functional requirements for e-Accessibility and the promotion of standards in collaboration with other major trading partners such as the US.

The consultation process was also supported by using the potentials of social web (web 2.0). An interactive blog (<http://www.ipolicy.eu>) was set up featuring a number of debates in the areas of e-Accessibility, ICT for excluded youth and immigration, ICT for the elderly. These had an average good response rate (by comparison with standard blog-sites). Interventions from experts in the area confirmed the potentials of ICT for social inclusion as well as the need to act from the EU in the area of e-Accessibility.

1.1. Context of the public consultation

E-inclusion means both inclusive information and communication technologies (ICT) and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion objectives¹. In other words, e-inclusion refers to the extent to which information and communication technologies help to equalise and promote participation in society at all levels by enhancing social relationships, facilitating economic opportunities for work and entrepreneurship, developing cultural aspects of society, encouraging civic participation.

The e-inclusion problem is therefore both the lack of inclusive ICT, i.e. an information society that has barriers due to the technology itself, as well as the lack of contributing with ICT to advancing economic and social inclusion in general. It is often conservatively estimated that currently about 40% of the population does not fully benefit from the information society².

To remedy this situation 34 countries committed to the Ministerial Declaration signed in Riga on 11 June 2006. The Riga Declaration identified policy targets in six areas, namely information and communication technologies (ICT) for use by the ageing population, geographical digital divides, e-accessibility (i.e. the usability of ICT for people with disabilities), digital literacy and competences, ICT for cultural diversity and inclusive e-government. Relevant extracts are reported in the box below.

Box 1: Riga targets: extracts from the Riga Declaration

Overall considerations and inspiration

- ICTs are a powerful driver of growth and employment (a quarter of EU GDP growth and around 50% of productivity growth are due to ICT), are a growing part of the economy and society, and are thus strongly instrumental to achieving the Lisbon strategy goals ;
- As ICTs contributes to improving the quality of everyday life and social participation of Europeans, the fight against discrimination to improve ICT access for people with disabilities and the elderly is particularly important ;
- "eInclusion" means both inclusive ICT and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion objective and policies should aim at both. reducing gaps in ICT usage and promoting the use of ICT to overcome exclusion;

General quantitative target

- To convincingly address eInclusion, the **differences in Internet** usage between current average use by the EU population and use by older people, people with disabilities, women, lower education groups, unemployed and "less-developed" regions should be **reduced to a half, from 2005 to 2010** .

Areas specific quantitative and qualitative policy target and action

- **ICT and Ageing**. Reduce to a half the gap in current average internet use between the EU population and older people; remove barriers to internal market of ICT services and products for the elderly; support active ageing at work, especially through greater training for ICT skills; support active participation of elderly in society; support independent living and quality of life
- **Geographical Divides**. Significantly reduce **regional disparities** in internet access across the EU, increase the availability of broadband (coverage) in under-served locations, and aim for **broadband coverage** to reach **at least 90%** of the EU population **by 2010** ;
- **eAccessibility** . Fully implement the eAccessibility provisions in EU legislation, use all other instruments available, from voluntary industry commitments to new legal provisions at EU and national level where appropriate, regularly assess the effectiveness of these various instruments.
- **Digital literacy**. Reduce by half by 2010 the digital literacy gap between the EU population and the unemployed, immigrants, people with low education levels, people with disabilities, and elderly, as well as marginalised young people
- **ICTs for Cultural Diversity** . Promote cultural diversity in relation to inclusion by: fostering pluralism, cultural identity and linguistic diversity in the digital space (multilingual, local, cultural heritage, European values content); improving economic and social participation and integration, creativity and entrepreneurship of immigrants and ethnic minorities through their greater participation in information society
- **Inclusive eGovernment** . Promote and ensure accessibility of all public web sites by 2010 ; Designing and delivering key services and public service policies in a user centric and inclusive way, using channels, incentives and intermediaries that maximise benefits and convenience for all so that no one is left behind.

¹ Riga Ministerial Declaration on an Inclusive Information Society, 11 June 2006.

² Impact Assessment in support of the Communication on the European i2010 e-Inclusion initiative: to be part of the information society, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/soccul/eincl/index_en.htm

As announced in the i2010 initiative³ and as called for by the Riga Ministerial Declaration, the European Commission has established a comprehensive policy strategy on e-Inclusion contained in the Communication on "the European i2010 e-Inclusion initiative: to be part of the information society". In preparing for this policy strategy, the Commission organised a public consultation in the period between June and August 2007 to allow interested parties to provide feedback and opinions to a number of questions concerning the several areas of e-Inclusion as identified in the Riga Declaration.

1.2. Structure of the consultation

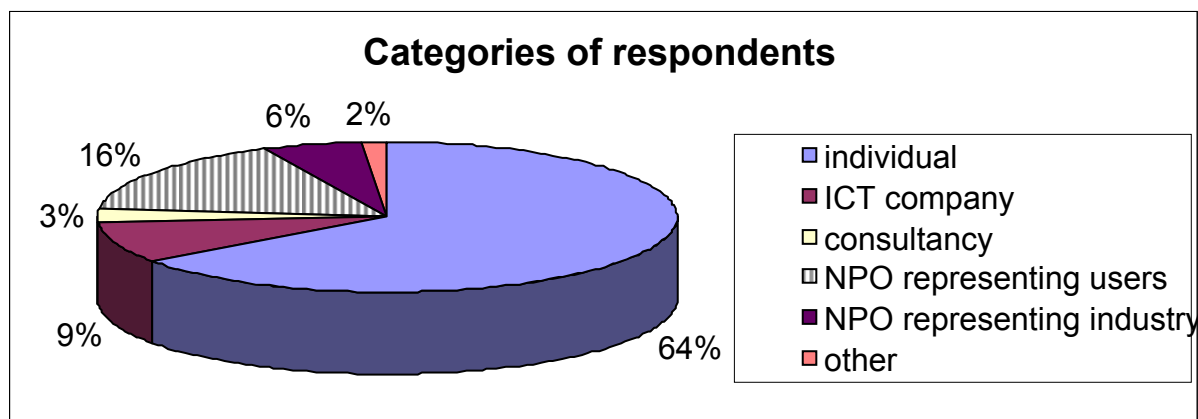
The consultation was divided in five parts addressing several areas of e-Inclusion:

- Part 1 was dedicated to the identification of respondents. Responses were anonymous. However respondents were asked to enter details on the entity they represented (or whether they were individuals), and their country of origin.
- Part 2 focused on options for "enabling e-Inclusion" by improving digital accessibility (e-Accessibility) and usability of ICT tools and services, enhancing digital literacy and competences⁴.
- Part 3 referred to policy options aimed at using the information society to "encourage economic and social participation" of the European ageing society, the marginalised youth, individuals coming from culturally diversified backgrounds (such as immigrants and ethnic minorities) and by making them participate in civil society and enjoy better public services
- Part 4 asked feedback on best ways to "maximise policy impact" by connecting e-Inclusion to other policy activities and activating stakeholders.

1.3. Who responded?

The public consultation received 211 on-line responses. 21 responses were sent by e-mail, often with detailed additional comments. 65% of the respondents were individuals, 35% were legal entities. These latter ones include non profit organisations representing users, ICT companies, non profit organisations representing the industry and consulting companies.

In presenting the results below the responses have been broken down by category, where relevant. The responses should be interpreted as indicating a direction and be compared with other material (studies etc.) rather than being fully representative.



Entities and individuals from the following nationalities answered the consultation: France (25%), followed by the United Kingdom (11%), Spain (7,5%) and Italy (5%). Belgium, Portugal, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands contributed to the consultation with a proportion between 3 and 5%. Other Member States contributed for less than 3%.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/inclusion/index_en.htm

⁴ Geographical digital divides were not the subject of this consultation since a public consultation on the geographical broadband divide was carried out in 2006 and led to the Communication "Bridging the broadband gap". A summary of the results can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/digital_divide/responses/index_en.htm

2. Enabling e-Inclusion

2.1. Introduction

e-Accessibility was given a particular focus in the consultation following the demand of the 2005 Communication on e-Accessibility to thoroughly assess this domain and consider further policy options, including legislative ones if appropriate.

e-Accessibility concerns arise when the content, functions or other features of ICT products and services pose problems of access and usage for some persons, such as people with disabilities or older people. It has relevance in many technology domains and affects a wide range of slight or severe impairments.

E-Accessibility solutions refer to 'mainstream' technologies offering accessibility features from the design phase and 'assistive' solutions whereby accessibility features 'add-ons' to the mainstream products and services. For reasons of economic efficiency and non-discriminatory treatment, the priority must be to ensure that mainstreaming of e-Accessibility is achieved wherever possible.

e-Accessibility embedded in ICT products and services help addressing the daily challenges that the many users with visual, hearing, speech, mobility and cognitive impairments face in using the technologies and services of the information society.

There are several EU legislations that affect e-Accessibility, such as the Electronic Communications Framework, the terminal equipment Directive, the 2004 public procurement Directives, the Directive on equal treatment in employment, as well as links in the e-commerce, copyright and audiovisual and media services Directives.

EU instruments for research and innovation in CIP and FP7 are also mobilised to ensure the necessary economies of scale and risk sharing to put in place technologies for e-Accessibility.

The consultation was also aimed to explore new possible measures to improve e-Accessibility, be it through existing or new legislation, or through other mechanisms such as web accessibility, user-industry cooperation, and exchanges of good practices.

Geographical digital divides were not the subject of this consultation since a public consultation on the geographical broadband divide was carried out in 2006 and led to the Communication "Bridging the broadband gap".⁵

2.2. e-Accessibility

In this area there are divergences between the views expressed by individuals and civil society organisations, and the views expressed by industrial players. Individuals and civil society organisations were more vocal in requiring more decisive legislative intervention in this area given the perceived failure of market players to address the issue. Industrial players, while recognising that regulatory fragmentation is emerging on e-Accessibility in Europe, warned against legislative measures that could excessively burden the industry and diverge from standards often used in other markets (such as the US).

From the consultation:

"Accessible ICT products and services will foster disabled users participation in education, employment, culture and society in general. People with disabilities and/or older people represent a significant number, so the integration of the people within the information society will bring both social, cultural and economic benefits. "

"EU legislation should create incentives to prioritize accessibility to the web and desktop applications which will improve the daily life of vulnerable groups. "

⁵ A summary of the results can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/ceurope/i2010/digital_divide/responses/index_en.htm

"The current situation in one agency works differently than another agency. There is no unity in the procurement process. This problem exists across Europe. There are no concrete advantages in the ICT world which show certification through third party or labelling yield better results/outcomes to serve people with disabilities than Supplier's declaration of conformity (SDoC). Moreover, SDoC is legally binding so the quality of work and the effort put to create such a document is not a question. Thus, there is no need to have a requirements or policy which locks industry into certification and this is the desirable state. [...] We are seeing a tendency of the member states to diverge instead of to converge since many unique and over requirements are introduced. "

a) Assessment of progress since the 2005 Communication

The respondents were asked whether adequate progress has been made in relation to e-Accessibility. Results mainly supported the idea that **market dynamics and attempts to improve implementation of existing legislation have failed to ensure e-Accessibility for a large number of users in need of accessible ICT tools and services to enjoy the benefits of the information society.**

Selected topic	Has there been adequate progress since 2005?
Adoption and implementation of legislation to promote e-Accessibility	Yes: 53%
Web accessibility	Yes: 63%
The use of public procurement to purchase accessible ICT	No: 58%
Certification of accessible ICT products and services	No: 60%
Overcoming legal fragmentation	No: 69%
Overcoming market fragmentation (of accessible solutions)	No: 72%
Design for all/ inclusive design of ICT products and services	No: 56%

Feedback from industrial players highlighted positive evolutions already undertaken in terms of technology development and diffusion in the markets of accessible solutions. Progress has been achieved through standardisation and increasing attention to user-centred design. However, also industrial players raised concerns on the level of fragmentation that is emerging by regulatory actions on e-Accessibility undertaken at national level without necessary coordination. Non-profit organisations representing users with disabilities highlighted missed opportunities in implementing e-Accessibility in ICT tools, services and websites.

b) Fostering e-Accessibility in EU legislation

Four options were explored in this area aimed at promoting additional measures to improve e-Accessibility. A large proportion of the individual respondents (72 to 87%) showed a positive attitude towards the four suggested options. A more reserved feedback emerged by industrial partners and industry associations.

- Option 1 – Reinforcing the implementation of relevant provisions in current European law

This option received a positive answer from 81% of the respondents. To the suggested action, the answers were as follows:

Suggested actions	
Common EU standards	76%

Systematic monitoring and exchange of practices	62%
Effective monitoring of transposition into national law and effective implementation	58%
Voluntary or compulsory certification mechanisms	35%
Labelling schemes	33%
Voluntary codes of practice	26%

Industry players invited to pursue effective monitoring of transposition into national law and effective implementation of existing legislation. The majority of industrial players maintained the development of common European standards as the most effective way to enhance e-Accessibility together with monitoring and exchange of practices. However, they recognised that harmonisation of relevant rules and standards is necessary in Europe.

- Option 2 – Introducing labelling schemes.

Individuals or civil society representatives were in favour of this measure. Some of the industrial players also gave some support to this option, however, they stated that labelling should be developed in the form of self-certifications by manufacturers and service providers.

Who should develop a European e-Accessibility label?	
User organisations	68%
European Commission	52%
Consumer organisations	40%
ICT suppliers	24%

- Option 3 – Revising and strengthening relevant provisions in current European law and funding programmes

This option received 87% of positive answers by individuals and civil society organisations. Business actors also supported the idea of making better use of public procurement practices and regional funds for procuring accessible technologies and services thus increasing the scale for their uptake.

Introducing accessibility and inclusion requirements in public funding relating to ICT, at national and European level (e.g. public procurement of ICT services and goods, European structural funds, research funding, etc.).	59%
Introducing or reinforcing accessibility and inclusion requirements in other relevant EU legislation on the information society (legislation on e-commerce, copyright, consumer protection, other).	16%
Revising the scope and implementation mechanisms of the EU universal service and users rights on electronic communications.	13%
Rendering mandatory relevant provisions in European law on electronic communications services and equipment.	12%

▪ Option 4 – Introducing new European legislation addressing e-Accessibility

72% of the respondents were in favour of the introduction of new legislation on e-Accessibility, in which:

- 59% would choose a specific EU legislation on selected aspects: in this regard, respondents suggested the area of web accessibility as one of the core issue to be dealt with by specific legislation;
- 40% would choose a general EU legislation on the accessibility of ICT products and services.

It is interesting to note the quality of the respondents favourable to this fourth option: 67% are individuals while the others are legal entities. From ICT industry, there was some degree of cautiousness regarding new legislation, which, according to several of these respondents, should not imply undue burdens to manufacturers and service providers. Before proposing legislation, the industry asked to explore other options based on voluntary agreements and practices as well as on fostering standardisation and codes of conduct. The industry position also made clear that –in case new legislation was passed- it should be based on functional requirements for accessibility, it should provide for self-regulatory measures including voluntary certification and it should be technology neutral.

Some other ways of improvement of e-Accessibility were suggested by the respondents. The most frequent one is to improve information and education on e-Accessibility related issues, from basic information to increased awareness and digital literacy. The estimated benefits and costs the respondents see in improving e-Accessibility relate not only to the disabled persons themselves but also to the supply side that would benefit from a larger market with less fragmentation. Industrial players also warned on the fact that additional costs for accessibility would be passed to all customers as they will have to be added to all products and services.

From the consultation:

"Web accessibility legislation should be one of the highest priorities. Requirements to e-government services regarding e-Accessibility should be formulated and enforced."

"We should promote free e-Accessibility. EU legislation should pursue the increase of the access to the use of the web information and data. "

"Real-time total conversation – provisions of RTTE Directive must be reinforced to ensure that real-time text conversation is accessible on all terminals within the scope of the Directive Emergency services."

"EU legislation for accessible digital television and web accessibility for the Deaf through Sign Language would be needed."

"There are two side of coin when we talk about stringent requirements. Some requirements are just not possible to be met at al, like WCA 1.0's turning off Java Script. Since Java script can be made accessible, there is no need to turn it off, but since the requirements say so, this becomes a must and this cannot be met in the dynamic sites. So, this brings no benefit to anybody."

"EU can introduce the reinforcement of effective monitoring of transposition into national law and effective implementation, Common European standards, systematic monitoring, exchange of practice and voluntary codes of practice and can [review current legislation by] introducing accessibility and inclusion requirements in public funding relating to ICT, at national and European level (public procurements of ICT services and goods, European structural funds, research funding) ."

Improving web accessibility is seen as a priority by 85% of the respondents. The best option to ensure web accessibility according to respondents is to pursue work on mandatory web-accessibility requirements and related standards for the public sector (53%). The respondents concluded that introducing more stringent requirements for e-Accessibility could have very positive impact for individuals, the European industry and the society overall.

c) Other mechanisms to improve e-Accessibility

Other mechanisms were presented as possible ways to improve e-Accessibility. The individual and business respondents were in majority favourable for the three suggested avenues, as follows⁶:

Other mechanisms which should be further exploited:	
Corporate Social Responsibility commitments and public authorities' commitments on e-Accessibility in relation to customers and own employees	68%
Monitoring and exchanging practices; making available evidence of economic or social impact	66%
User-industry cooperation, e.g. resulting voluntary agreements and guidelines	61%

From the consultation:

"More public places where ICT – illiterate people can try and learn without or low costs, accompanied by empathetic teachers."

"Standards for interoperability between the smart systems and web accessibility."

"Co-funding in the acquisition of accessible public workstation or programs to support adoption by disabled persons."

"Publication on best practice. It would be helpful if there is such best [...]. This information cannot be found anywhere so to have best practice document in very helpful. Having a harmonized standard is a decision that will help [...] work in the area of accessibility [...] within organisations. Acknowledging Self-Declarations of Conformity as another form of products declaration will increase innovation and competition, increase time to market, reduce costs, provide more options / choice. "

2.3. Digital literacy

The questions related to digital literacy were aimed at validating the need for more actions in order to increase digital literacy. The answers show a consensus regarding the importance of digital literacy. It is clearly agreed that ICT-related competences should be more strongly promoted within education schemes, and that partnerships are encouraged to promote digital competencies. Furthermore, European coordination and efforts to promote standard qualifications and support initiatives on digital literacy are also encouraged.

Digital literacy is a necessary condition to strengthen the participation in society of people at risk of exclusion. The consultation highlighted that training courses on digital competences for older people are not sufficient for them to embrace information society services (72% of respondents). Incentive schemes are needed for promoting broadband access by elderly people as a key enabler for inclusive services (69% of respondents).

How to improve digital literacy?	
Should ICT-related competences be more strongly promoted in the framework of informal and formal education schemes?	Yes: 90%

⁶ Multiple choices reply.

Should there be more active partnerships to promote digital competencies (e.g. partnerships between public authorities, education and social organisations, ICT services and products suppliers)?	Yes: 82%
Should there be further European co-ordination and efforts to promote standard qualifications and support initiatives on digital literacy?	Yes: 75%

From the consultation:

"Governmental initiatives promoting the need for increase in digital literacy are necessary."

"European support for a standardised approach to helping people to gain digital literacy, is highly recommended."

"Public Authorities aim at ensuring that citizens are not passive users of new technologies but also that they are fully aware of the tools available to participate actively it is very important for all citizens to gain a certain level of digital competence. The concept of European Computer Driving Licence by promoting a "European Information technologies Driving License" could be one way to do so. "

3. Encouraging economic and social participation

As recognised in the Riga Ministerial Declaration adopted in June 2006, the Information Society has much potential for increasing social and economic participation. Particularly, an inclusive information society provides opportunities for:

- Increasing social and economic participation of the European ageing society,
- Better integrating marginalised young people,
- Capitalising on cultural diversity, and
- Participating in civil society and enjoying better public services (eGovernment).

3.1. The ageing factor

Europe's population is ageing. This demographic change poses significant challenges. Information and communication technologies can play an important role in dealing with these challenges. Age-friendly ICT based products and services have the potential to play a prominent role for ageing well at the workplace, in the community or at home:

From the consultation:

"Web 2 Accessibility is the key in ensuring our elderly members understand the modern IT world. We have to help them to understand what we understand, and make this approach as simple and straightforward as possible."

a) Market barriers

53% of the respondents consider that the existence of different national and regional regulations for the reimbursement and certification of ICT solutions as a barrier to an EU market for ICT in support of ageing well.

In the meantime, the lack of awareness constitutes as well a great barrier (69% of the answers).

Solutions to tackle this situation are seen in training courses on digital literacy and competences for older people, as well as incentive schemes promoting broadband access by the elderly.

What are the main market barriers to ICT products and services for elderly people?	
Different national and regional regulations for reimbursement and certification of ICT solutions.	53%
lack of awareness by older workers and employers.	69%
Insufficient training courses on digital literacy and competences for older people.	68%
There is a need for incentive schemes for promoting broadband access by elderly people.	65%

b) Active participation at work

The preferred priority actions at EU level are:

- Adaptation of ICT products and services to the needs of older people,
- Promotion of ICT-training for the elderly workforce,
- Research and innovation on new ICT enhanced methods of working and accessible ICT suitable for ageing workers,
- Stimulate the diffusion of ICT products and services adapted to the needs of older people through the use of public procurement.

Two other options come with less emphasis, namely the provision of evidence of economic impact of ICT for active ageing in the work situation, and increasing transparency of regulatory measures and potential technical barriers for ICT for ageing.

3.2. ICT, youth and cultural diversity

The inclusion of marginalised cultural and ethnic groups and young people raises a number of questions, some of which are related to ICT, either because they are caused by the diffusion of ICT or because ICT could help addressing them.

There is a strong consensus among the respondents on the impact of the skills gap on the exclusion of some groups of young people (80%). The issue of affordability of ICT is also seen as contributing to their exclusion (80%). On the other hand, the respondents recognise that ICT can be a tool for increasing the inclusion of marginalised young people (84%).

As a consequence, respondents recognised the need for a coordinated approach at European level to increase the participation of minorities and young people, through the help of ICT. Such an approach should be mainly linked to education policies, and to a lesser extend to employment policies. However, the respondents did not see the need to link this approach with immigration/integration policies.

3.3 New web technologies for social capital (Web 2.0)

A new generation of web applications stimulates users to contribute their own data (such as their photos, links, movies or books), to connect to each other and to form communities.

New web technologies such as Web 2.0 are recognised as important for digital and social inclusion for 67% of the respondents, while the same proportion also consider that services could be better tailored to users needs through Web 2.0 technologies. Also, the respondents agree that these technologies could allow better co-creation (between users and service providers) of social services for inclusion purposes (72%).

3.4. Inclusive e-Government

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of public services for inclusion through enhanced ICT use

Further guidance and support on increasing ICT competences and resources for public services providers in relation to services for social inclusion are considered as being needed for 84% of the respondents. Such guidance and support include training and better and more adapted ICT equipment and solutions, all these to be supported by national and European funding.

From the consultation:

"In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of public services for inclusion through enhanced ICT use we recommend to facilitate the access on the importance of citizen involving citizen in decision-making processes- especially in the local level – through online surveys, opinion polls, discussion forums, e-citizens juries, e-referenda and to facilitate the access it ICT tools, Subsiding the acquisition for disadvantaged groups, especially for persons with disabilities needing adapted equipments, and creating accessible and user-friendly public ICT centres."

4. Maximising impact

4.1. Connecting e-Inclusion to other policy activities

Responses to this issue reflect a strong wish to see e-Inclusion concerns taken into account in other policies:

e-Inclusion considerations should be further incorporated into design and implementation of other policies (ICT, social affairs, employment, consumer protection, education)	87%
International co-operation on e-Inclusion should be reinforced	77%
EC research and innovation efforts relating to e-Inclusion should be increased	80%
National and local efforts on e-Inclusion should be further coordinated at European level, through systematic reporting, discussions on political priorities, exchange of practices	81%

4.2. The role of stakeholders

Respondents consider that stakeholders should, in general, play a more active role as regards e-Inclusion.

e-Inclusion should be further promoted through Corporate Social Responsibility and public authorities' commitment in relation to customers and own employees	75%
ICT users and representative associations should be more involved in designing and implementing e-Inclusion policy measures, and in designing and deploying ICT products and services on the market	87%
The European Commission has a role to play by further supporting the dialogue of e-Inclusion between relevant stakeholders	87%