

Ageing Well in the Information Society

EU Action Plan



Getting the conditions right – faster take-up and delivery

From awareness to action

Awareness of the challenges facing Europe is one thing: understanding how ICT can shape conditions to accelerate take-up and delivery is another altogether. Researchers teaming up with industry and users are working together to make everyday life better and safer for the elderly. But still more common visions, strategies and partnerships (public and private) are needed to make a real difference.

What is being done at EU-level? Efforts are underway to set up an Innovation Platform for Ageing Well as a forum for co-operation and for developing a common strategic (research) agenda. Through studies, high-level discussions with Member States and regulatory groups, the EU is working to remove remaining market, legal and technical barriers to achieving Europe's 'ageing well' vision. For example, reimbursement and certification schemes for technologies to help the elderly vary significantly from one country to another.

Other priorities include greater emphasis on e-Accessibility initiatives, bridging the 'digital divide' and 'broadband gap', as well as streamlining Europe's e-Health infrastructure (i.e. patient records and systems interoperability). Further, the Commis-

sion is setting up ICT pilot projects under the EU Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, initially focusing on independent living and chronic disease monitoring. A European award scheme for smart homes and independent living applications will also be created.

Delivering on promises

The EU has already stepped up research in ICT for ageing in its research programmes – with emphasis on user involvement and mainstreaming age-friendly technology. What is next? Better co-ordination between Member States is needed to stimulate market-oriented research in this field. This would be achieved via a new joint research initiative aptly named 'Ageing Well in the Information Society'. Here also, an industry focused research technology platform for ICT and ageing will be indispensable to deliver the goods.

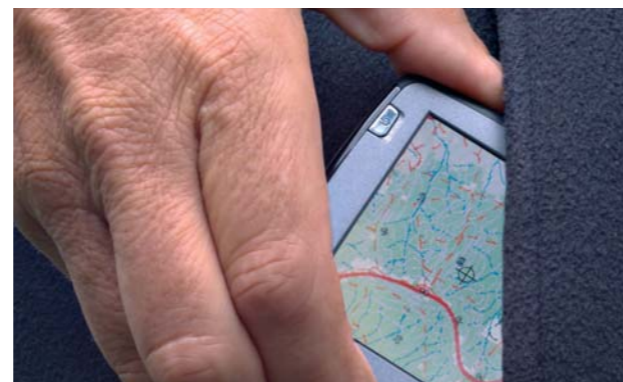
What are the key messages?

- We need to rethink the ageing society – see past the challenge to the opportunity.
- We need to better understand and raise awareness about what is needed and of available good practices.
- We need to tackle the critical barriers preventing take-up of ICT by older citizens.
- We need to work in closer partnership (elderly users and their representatives, industry and service providers, public authorities and policy-makers).

Today's successes in ageing well

Projects, such as the EU-funded MAPPED, ASK-IT and MobilAlarm, are empowering the elderly and impaired through intelligent and adaptable technology. For example, leaving the house for an elderly impaired person can be a daunting task. But using smart phones, the route for a shopping trip can be planned ahead, avoiding unnecessary pitfalls. And if something happens, the person can trigger their MobilAlarm no matter where they are!

<http://services.txt.it/MAPPED>
www.ask-it.org
www.mobilalarm-eu.org



Read more: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/einclusion

What's at stake?

Europe, like much of the industrialised world, is facing a huge challenge: how to maintain living standards as populations age. While diverse measures – political, economic, social and scientific – are being mobilised to prepare for the challenge, one very important field has taken a back seat... until now.

With the adoption of the European Action Plan for 'Ageing well in the information society', this all looks set to change. Information and communications technology (ICT) can empower older citizens while generating benefits for businesses, the economy and society at large.

Social challenge or economic opportunity?

Treating ageing as a problem and the elderly as a burden on society is out of step with reality. Europeans living longer should be seen as major

achievement of European science, health and social programmes, not a disadvantage. What's more, the elderly have a great depth of knowledge, experience, resources and – aided by ICT developments – the ability to continue actively contributing to society, the marketplace and the economy. The opportunities are vast.

New perspectives – 'triple-win' for Europe

We know the ageing of Europe's population is a challenge for our social and health systems, but it is also an economic opportunity for new, age-friendly products and services.

Mobilising ICT to meet this challenge will deliver a three-fold positive spin-off for Europe:

- Improving the quality of life of many elderly people, their carers and relatives.
- Creating new business opportunities for European industries.
- Helping make health and social services more efficient and personalised.

Action Plan – getting started

The main goals of the Action Plan are to:

- Raise awareness of the issues and opportunities, and build common strategies.
- Establish enabling conditions (regulations, technology, skills, etc.).
- Promote widespread take-up of ICT (benchmarking, pilots, user acceptance, interoperability, etc.).
- Prepare for future challenges through joint research, innovation and dissemination.





❖ Battling the demographics

By 2020, around a quarter of the EU population will be over 65 and the number of people over 80 will more than double, leading to more spending (4-8% of GDP) on pensions, health and long-term care. Disability affects large parts of society and elderly groups. Around a fifth of people over 50 experience severe vision, hearing and dexterity problems.

ICT offers many opportunities to lift this burden and enrich the lives of the elderly and infirmed. But low computer ownership, literacy and use stand in the way.



❖ A policy of change

This Action Plan, an i2010 Flagship Initiative, foresees that technology should be levered to help address the independent living, health and well-being needs of ageing people in Europe. The Action Plan is a first response to the EU's Riga Ministerial Declaration on e-Inclusion and supports the Lisbon agenda to promote growth and competitiveness. It also gives impetus to a new joint research programme dedicated to Ambient Assisted Living.



Trouble ahead... ?

- Healthcare and Pension systems are struggling to cope with additional demand.
- There is a growing mismatch between the labour market for ICT workers and ICT literacy.
- Workers over 60 are unlikely to have received on-the-job computer training.
- Age-friendly work design is an underserved, under-researched field.
- Up to 60% of 50-64 year-olds may face difficulties (physical or cognitive) using ICTs.



ICT for ageing well can become a driver for jobs and growth and a successful lead market for Europe.



... or rosy picture?

- Over 65s possess significant wealth, estimated at over €3 trillion.
- The market for smart home applications (for mobility, dressing, etc.) will triple by 2020: from 13 to 37 million people.
- The market for products and services aimed at age-related impairment: 84 million people by 2020.
- Early patient hospital discharges, thanks to mobile monitoring, would save €1.5 billion per year in Germany alone.
- Dutch seniors would spend €500 million per year above current outlays if targeted by appropriate goods and services.
- New applications are being developed all the time including: route planning, home-care and remote-health monitoring, intelligent alarms, better interfaces for accessing ICT, and more.

❖ Action Plan – in real-life situations

This forward-looking Action Plan is designed to create political and industrial momentum for developing and deploying user-friendly ICT tools and services. It seeks to mainstream the needs of older users of ICT. It supports other policy areas – in growth and competitiveness, demographic change, employment, health, and equal opportunities – in addressing the challenges of ageing societies. And it coordinates efforts, adding several new actions to integrate, complement and reinforce existing work.

What stands in the way?

In addition to improving lives and living standards for the elderly, 'ICT for ageing well' has all the potential to be a major driver of jobs and growth and a successful lead market for Europe, but a number of hurdles need to be overcome.



One plan, three 'life situations'

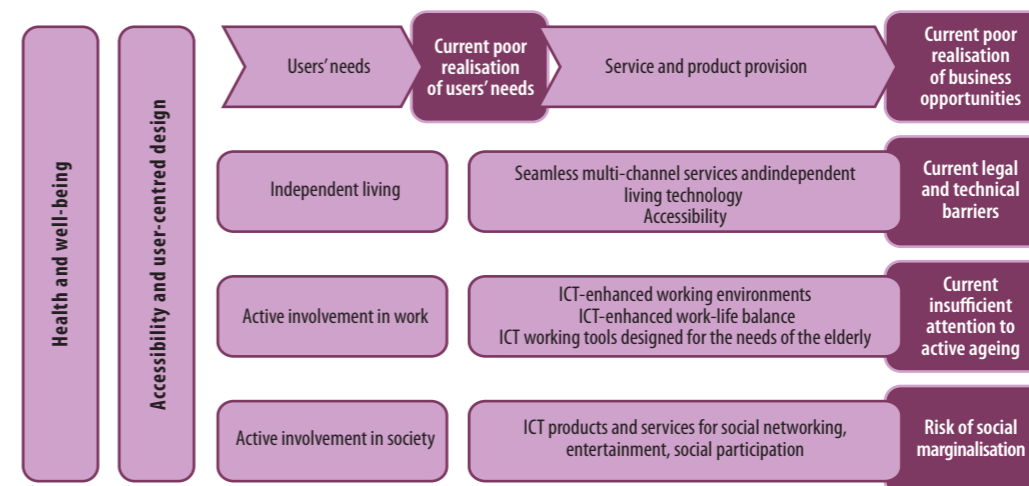
- **Ageing well at work** – staying active and productive for longer, with better quality of work and work-life balance with the help of easy-to-access ICT, innovative practices for adaptable, flexible workplaces, ICT skills and competencies, and ICT enhanced learning (e-skills and e-learning).
- **Ageing well in the community** – overcoming the isolation that many elderly people experience by keeping up social networks and reducing loneliness with ICT solutions (publicly and privately supplied).
- **Ageing well at home** – where technology helps people enjoy a better quality of life for longer while maintaining a high degree of independence, autonomy and dignity.



Ageing issues are certainly mainstream public concerns, but industry and providers are slow to build the needs of the elderly into mainstream product development.



ICT for Ageing –Barriers



Users: ageing population, NGOs, special interest groups

Players: ICT industry for mainstream products and services; Electronic communication services and infrastructure providers; ICT assistive technology industry; eHealth industry; Healthcare institutions; Social care institutions and intermediaries; Insurers and financial institutions; Entertainment industry