

## Webcast

### **PS9 – DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS: BENCHMARKING SESSION**

This session considered what evidence we have today for assessing and understanding the impact of ICT on inclusion and where we should be moving towards in data gathering and analysis. The session was chaired by Claude Wiseler, Minister for the Civil Service and Administrative Reform and Minister for Civil Engineering, Luxembourg. Mr Wiseler opened the session by reminding the audience that the Riga Ministerial Declaration contains specific targets, such as broadband coverage to reach at least 90% of the EU population by 2010, which requires the collection of statistical data. There are however a wider set of issues as regards more appropriate and fit-for-purpose performance measurement and indicators for eInclusion.

eInclusion is a complex topic with many dimensions. Simon Robinson (Empirica) illustrated the complexity by reviewing the regional divide of technology penetrations – it varies depending on the technology in question. Drawing on the survey data from SIBIS, SeniorWatch and eUser, he addressed the kind of evidence and the indicators properties that are best suited to guiding eInclusion policy, and recommended a clear policy focus for effective monitoring. Empirica's Digital Divide Index (DIDx) was presented as providing an appropriate level of focus. Robinson argued for a more analytical modelling approach to distinguish between factors that contribute to improved inclusion. He outlined a set of requirements for evidence-based eInclusion Policy decisions. The eUser project, for example, has proposed an "ACM" approach, which analyses eService inclusion not just in terms of access, but also competence and motivation. Robinson further proposed a possible indicator for mainstreaming eAccessibility products and services (MIDx).

Sally Wyatt (University of Amsterdam) explored the available data on non-use of the Internet. She questioned access as a meaningful indicator for eInclusion. More generally, it is assumed that Internet "haves" are in a better socio-economic position than Internet "have-nots". Wyatts argued instead that some people chose not to use the Internet. She presented a taxonomy of Internet non-use which indicates a different picture to conventional access-based measurement. More importantly, it suggests a new set of policy implications for tackling eInclusion. For example: Is non-use always or necessarily a problem? What data are needed to monitor non-partial and changing use? What different provisions are needed for voluntary as well as involuntary non-users? Finally, Wyatt asked: If the Internet is the solution, what was the problem?

Drawing on the results of recent research, including a currently ongoing study on eInclusion funded by DG INFSO, Joe Cullen (The Tavistock Institute) reviewed what is being done in eInclusion at the trans-national level and also within the member states. Echoing Robinson, he highlighted the risk of fragmentation of eInclusion policies, initiatives and actions, because of different perspectives that have been placed on eInclusion, e.g. technical, economic, educational etc. Echoing Wyatt, he highlighted the limitation of using access as an indicator. A three stage eInclusion policy benchmarking framework was proposed, addressing access divide, usage divide, and the quality of use (particularly at the grassroot level). Benchmarking key indicators should cover not just individuals and households, but also enterprises and public services. Cullen suggested that we need to look at the big picture of eInclusion, taking into account more sophisticated and nuanced issues such as the "civilisation choice" that underlies particular technologies, as well as new technologies such as blogging and podcasting that enable more complex and creative data collection.

Claire Shewbridge (OECD) presented the results from the 2003 survey of OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) on student's access to computers, use of computers, as well as their attitudes and confidence in completing a range of computing tasks. PISA is a policy-driven instrument to collect evidence on how well 15-year-olds perform in key school subjects together with background information about their families, how they learn, their attitudes to school and information provided by their school principals on the schooling environment. The survey showed that while access to computers in school has increased in most OECD countries, there are large numbers of students still having only limited opportunities to use them. Moreover, even though access to computers is more universal at school than at home, 15-year-old students use their computers at home more frequently.

Christophe Demunter (Eurostat) briefly presented the official EU statistics on eInclusion for 2005, which indicate that a lot of people are still being left behind as non(-regular) Internet users. Clara Centeno (IPTS) provided a brief outline of her organisation's research results into eInclusion in the new Member States, which indicates that there is close alignment between ICT impact and economic growth. The main challenge of eInclusion is not technical, but financial, social and structural.

The session suggested that that good practice in policy-making demands taking decisions that are informed by sound evidence and a robust analytical framework. Consultation and involvement of stakeholders, particularly the (intended) end users of inclusive products and services, is vital. This would avoid, for example, incorrect assumptions being built into the analytical framework.

**Objective 1: To present (and acknowledge) what evidence we have today in benchmarking eInclusion, and what progress has been observed in the different Riga eInclusion areas**

Barriers:

- eInclusion is complex and has multiple dimensions, including the soft issues
- Lack of a robust analytical framework which takes into account the different dimensions and stages of eInclusion
- The (limited) availability of data sets in some areas, e.g. quality of use
- Interpretation of these data sets

Possible actions by 2008:

- Continuing work under the established i2010 benchmarking eInclusion indicators
- Review the use of qualitative and quantitative measures
- Monitor and contribute to forthcoming studies and reviews, e.g. Special Eurostat modules, e-accessibility measurement study, Transform regional benchmarking project, Digital Literacy, etc...
- Continue collaboration with OECD and other statistical international bodies
- Regularly consult with all stakeholders and seek their input to benchmarking and measurement
- Build an enhanced eInclusion benchmarking Framework for the 2008 initiative