PROMOTING CONSCIOUS AND ACTIVE LEARNING AND AGING

HOW TO FACE CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES?

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(COORD.)
ELDERLY & ICT: A NEED AND URGENCY FOR AN EFFECTIVE INFO-INCLUSION

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Abstract
It is a fact that the world is aging and the developed countries are the most affected by this reality. In consequence, the majority of the population comprehends elderly people. The present knowledge society is characterized by technologies, digital devices and by the so called ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and most present-day activities uses those devices. Recently, several expressions and services have introduced the ‘e’ and it is common to talk about e-commerce, e-learning, e-banking, e-government, e-Health... it means that citizens must be digitally literate to deal with and use those services as a routine of their everyday life. However there are a large number of people who have not the necessary digital skills and consequently they become info-excluded. The group of the info-excluded is represented by women, people with a low level of literacy, the unemployed, and the elderly. Being sure that the elderly will constitute in the future (and in the present) the greater percentage of the citizens it is urgent to promote initiatives in order to train those citizens in ICT. The European Union already felt that need and therefore several action plans were launched (e.g. The Riga Declaration; i2010 e-Inclusion Initiative). It is consensual that ICT will promote a better quality of life so the elderly will benefit from it in order to promote an adequate active aging. It is the aim of this article to discuss the main initiatives carried on and present the main obstacles, advantages, and some clues for the near future for the use of ICT by elderly people.

Keywords: Elderly; ICT; Info-inclusion; Info-exclusion.

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An aging society: Perspectives for the future

The world is experiencing an important demographic transformation due to the unprecedented aging of the population of almost all developed and developing countries. The increasing presence of older people in society makes people of all ages more aware that they are living in a multi-generational society. Increasingly, aging populations may influence global patterns in almost all services, labour, capital markets, and traditional social support systems like health care and pensions mainly in European countries. In all the Member States of the European Union (EU) the current fertility rates are low and if birth rates continue to decrease as predicted, the proportion of young and old citizens will undergo a historic crossover. A moderate projection of aging in the EU for the period between 2004 and 2050 shows that the population aged 65+ will increase by 58 million or 77% and that, at the same time, the working-age population will drop by 48 million or 16%. In the EU, this might mean that the ratio of people of working age would be two for every older citizen, instead of four working people at the present time (European Commission, 2007).

The next figure (23 and 24) show this tendency and put in evidence the aging of the society in all over the world. It may be observed that the European Union and the most developed countries present the highest percentage of elderly people as was stated above:

![Figure 23: Proportion of the population aged 65 and over in selected world regions (Source: Eurostat 2007)](image-url)