Participation in a research and development programme: enhancing the quality of life of older people through the use of new ICT

2007/0116(COD) - 14/06/2007 - Document attached to the procedure

PURPOSE: to present an Action Plan on ICT and ageing: “Ageing well in the Information Society”.

CONTENT: the Commission has decided to launch an action plan on ageing well in the information society, as announced in the i2010 initiative. Its purpose is two-fold. Firstly to enable a better quality of life for older people and secondly, to create a strong European ICT industry in the field of ageing.

Europe’s population is ageing. Average life expectancy has increased from 55 in 1920 to over 80 today. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of people aged 65 to 80 will rise by nearly 40%. The demographic change poses significant challenges to Europe’s society and economy. ICT can play an important role in dealing with these challenges. For example, it enables the efficient delivery of health and social care, as well as increasing opportunities for community and self-care innovation.

For the purposes outlined above, the Commission has decided to launch this Action Plan. It is being accompanied by a new research programme on “Ageing well in the Information Society”, under Article 169 of the EU Treaty. The Action Plan focuses on three main target groups: citizens, companies and public authorities.

For citizens it seeks to offer a better quality of life and better health provision through prolonged independent living, active ageing at work and increased social participation. For companies, it seeks to offer increased market size and market opportunities in the internal market as well as a better skilled and productive workforce and to offer them a stronger position in the global market. For authorities the action plan will to seek to lower the cost of caring for the elderly, offer increased efficiencies and offer a better overall quality of health and social care. To realise these ambitions, the Action Plan will be centred around four main areas of activity namely:

Raising awareness: In the course of 2007 the Commission will seek to bring business and civil organisation together in order to establish an innovation platform for ageing well in the information society. The purpose of this platform will be to develop common roadmaps and to showcase common paths across the delivery chain.

Putting enabling conditions in place: In the course of 2007 and 2008, the Commission will assess what market barriers currently exist that hinder the uptake of technologies relating to the elderly. Under consideration will be the radio frequency identification systems for independent living (RFID). The Commission will also facilitate Member States’ efforts to meet their Riga objectives in terms of providing guidance. Further, in line with the e-Health Action Plan the Commission will issue a recommendation on e-Health interoperability in 2007 that addresses core e-Health infrastructure data – such as patient information, emergency data etc. The Member States, businesses, user organisations and public authorities are asked to promote basic access through broadband to ICT services for ageing and to increase the uptake of digital technologies amongst the elderly.

Promoting take-up: The Commission intends to launch a set of ICT pilot project as part of the “Competitiveness and Innovation Programme” (CIP). It will also encourage benchmarking as well as exploring ICT innovations relating to active ageing at work. A European award for smart homes and

independent living applications will be established. Professional associations, industry, academia and user organisations will all be encouraged to establish training programmes and accessible websites.

Preparing for the future: The Commission has already stepped up ICT research for ageing in the e-Health and e-Inclusion initiatives set out in the 7th Framework Programme on Information Society Technologies. Focus is given to mainstreaming technologies for the elderly. In addition, the Commission is proposing a new research initiative "Ageing well in the Information Society". The purpose of this initiative is to stimulate market oriented research on applications for independent living.

Conclusion: The Commission calls upon all interested parties (civil society, public authorities, the private sector) to act in partnership in order to achieve the objective for ageing well in the information society. The Member States are invited to actively support and implement the actions. The European Parliament is invited to support the rights and opportunities of older people in the information society. The ultimate objective being the full participation of all in Europe's economy and society.