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

This Commission staff working document supports the Communication on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing (“Ageing Well in the Information Society in Europe”), which presents a response to the Riga e-Inclusion Ministerial Declaration and the Communication on the Demographic Future of Europe (see INI/2007/2156).

The paper analyses the individual, larger-scale economic and social aspects, and the business dimensions of ICT and ageing and suggests a range of policy responses in the form of an action plan to overcome regulatory, technical, skills and other barriers and to fully exploit the opportunities in ICT and ageing in Europe.

These actions are suggestions for the **i2010 flagship initiative** "on caring for people in an ageing society addressing technologies for wellbeing, independent living and health", announced in i2010, or for short "the i2010 initiative for ageing well in the information society", and as the first major contribution to the 2008 EU e-Inclusion Initiative. Actions are suggested in 4 inter-related areas:

1. Raising awareness and building common strategies, including cooperation in a partnership for innovation with stakeholders, awareness raising events, benchmarking exercises and Ministerial level exchanges under forthcoming Presidencies;
2. Putting enabling conditions in place including the assessment of regulatory options to overcome fragmentation in reimbursement of ICT solutions for ageing; interoperability in eHealth; and raising skills in age-friendly design and accessibility of ICT;
3. Promoting widespread take-up by good practice exchange and demonstration trials of independent living in smart homes, telecare for chronic diseases through the Competitiveness and Innovation programme, pilot projects by regions a.o. using Structural Funds for, and innovative public procurement contributing to user acceptance, interoperability, viable business models and sustainable large-scale implementation;
4. Preparing for the future by significantly stepping up joint research and widely disseminating research results, including the launch of the new 7th Framework Programme Article 169 Assisted Living Initiative and strengthened involvement of European Technology Platforms.

This paper collects evidence on the emerging needs from the European ageing population in the Information Society, the potential benefits deriving from the growing senior market, the challenges and opportunities to be assessed and captured for all stakeholders involved and specifically for the final users.

Many of the issues raised in the paper also touch upon the more general debate at the EU level on long-term economic aspects linked to demographic change. However, the paper concentrates on what ICT and the Information Society can best achieve to make the ageing society better adapt to a changing a demographic and economic environment.

Three main areas of possible action have been identified as the key domains where ICT can contribute to a factual improvement in the living conditions of the ageing society while encouraging the necessary societal and economic adaptation to the ongoing demographic change. The suggested actions refer to:

- the opportunities to reduce forms of exclusion for elderly persons in the Information Society;

- the ways in which ICT can help to pursue active working patterns combined with optimal work-life balance;

- the support from ICT in providing elderly persons with autonomous and independent lives while enhancing the provision of health and social care.

The paper also supports the need to address ethical issues and strengthen stakeholder involvement (Europe's citizens in the ageing society, public authorities at all levels, providers of general public services, social care, life-long learning or health-care, financial and insurance service providers -whether private or public-, the ICT industry, the construction and housing industry, the transport and automotive industry).

Lastly, the paper provides grounds for the launch of the i2010 flagship initiative on ICT and ageing as a combined set of awareness and consensus building actions, updating of regulatory frameworks and other enabling conditions, uptake measures and. Research actions.