# Demographic future of Europe

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In regard to the Communication from the Commission on "The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity", the Council adopted a series of conclusions which may be summarised as follows:

- recognising that: ageing of the population is one of Europe's most pressing challenges,
- the isolation and loneliness experienced by many elderly citizens can be mitigated by the facilitation of social interaction provided by electronic communications,
- the use of ICT–based products and services will allow ageing citizens to live longer independently, and will provide opportunities for enhancing their safety, security and healthcare,
- the increasing older population is likely to create pressure for the development of a new and enlarged market for innovation, creation and exportation of new products and services within the Community as well as globally,
- ICT has significant potential to create a triple-win by 1) improving the quality of life of citizens, 2) containing the rising costs of care, and 3) enabling new and growing business opportunities for Europe,
- market barriers and fragmentation, insufficient market development and awareness, high diversity of rules and regulations, limited adoption of inclusive design, insufficient research and innovation, lack of affordable solutions, digital illiteracy and insufficient understanding of users must be overcome for Europe to fully reap the benefits of ICT for ageing well,
- it is appropriate to adopt a comprehensive cross-policy approach both at national and at EU levels, including electronic communications and information society, social, employment, public procurement, health and urban policies,

the Council calls on the Member States to take the following measures:

- actively contribute to the Action Plan for Ageing Well in the Information Society through appropriate initiatives including the development of national action plans;
- report progress, including on relevant targets of the Riga declaration (notably halving by 2010 internet usage and digital literacy gaps of elderly people and realising web accessibility of public websites), as part of the envisaged reporting on e-Inclusion, as part of the envisaged i2010 European e-Inclusion Initiative, at the end of 2008;
- clarify rules and regulations affecting ageing well solutions and cooperate with the Commission in analysing market barriers;
- take into account the needs of the older age-group population as well as the potential it creates for new markets and services when establishing their national research policies and programmes, in particular with a view to the e-inclusion of the elderly;
- stimulate cooperation of all stakeholders at the national and European levels, visibility of existing solutions and exchange of good practices, including demonstrations of the available services and actions in Europe;
- mobilise and support local and regional authorities, given their important role in the delivery of social and health solutions for elderly people and encourage cooperation and interoperability to increase economies of scale;
- mobilise financial incentives for research, innovation and market uptake.

In parallel, it invites the Commission to:

- make proposals in 2009 to overcome legal and technical barriers to ICT for ageing well;
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- contribute to mechanisms for the exchange of experiences and good practices;
- support Member States in giving visibility to existing and available services and actions in this field within the Community;
- improve e-accessibility for elderly persons and disabled persons, including through European standards and legislative action as appropriate;
- sustain research, innovation and deployment support in European programmes.

The Council invites industry to: i) establish in 2008 an innovation platform with users on joint research, innovation, and deployment agendas, linking to relevant European Technology Platforms to enable European leadership, in particular by collaborating and developing joint research activities with European research and academic institutions for the development of inclusive ICT products and services; ii) deepen understanding of user requirements, and contribute to a European curriculum on inclusive design by 2008; iii) step up efforts, with authorities, on digital literacy training for elderly people; iv) enable older employees to remain active with ICT.

Lastly, it called on civil society to i) closely cooperate with industry and academic and research institutions on joint research, innovation and deployment agendas; ii) make available information that will increase the understanding of market barriers and improve market transparency; iii) for regional authorities, actively incorporate ICT for ageing well in regional development agendas and participate in relevant Regions for Economic Change networks.