

PREFACE

The Internet, computers, mobile phones, and other developments of information and communication technologies as optic fiber and digital TV, have deeply transformed the way people live – how they learn, work, use their free time and interact, both in personal relationships and with organizations.

The Information Society flowing from this transformation, where the organization in networks, the mobile communication and the globalization of interactions assume special roles simultaneously made possible by the information and communication technologies and enhancing their generalized usage, is among us already for several decades. It is no more a futuristic vision, but a reality with a substantial past and world expansion whose analysis and understanding should be sustained on concrete empirical data and rigorous sociological methodologies.

It is also clear the central importance of this transformation for current and future economic opportunities and for the quality of life of people – the future of societies is played on this table board – hence its practical relevance strengthens the need for its systematic characterization and monitoring.

The data for our country reveal major contrasts in the usage of information and communication technologies that bring us particular specificities within Europe. For example, regarding the adult population usage of computers and the Internet within EU25, Portugal has simultaneously one of the highest values for the population with secondary or higher education (only after the Nordic countries, Netherlands, Luxembourg and United Kingdom) and one of the lowest values for the population with less than secondary education, which is in Portugal a very high fraction of all the adults. This example shows that we have a special situation whose rapid evolution requires our own solutions.

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The electronic publication “Information Society in Portugal 2006” is a compilation of data resulting from the continued collaboration of the several institutions involved in its preparation, themselves organized in a network, but of also others that were pioneers in the observation of this area, among which the former Observatory of the Sciences and Technologies deserves a special reference. Practically all these data where already available in the Internet, but assembling them facilitates the access to an integrated set of interest for understanding the Information Society situation and evolution in Portugal. We are aware that the work to be performed in this area must be further pursued, with the flexibility necessary in a period of quick changes, and must mobilize institutions and researchers for the analysis and understanding of the varied and complex transformations that are being felt in society, and to open new windows over the future.

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