Position Paper 'eInclusion'

Executive Summary

A knowledge economy is necessary to ensure economic growth in the future. However, a knowledge economy cannot exist without an inclusive knowledge society. In line with the general message of the European Commission, the track eInclusion aims to inspire countries, governments, organizations and individuals to stimulate participation in a digitalized society by demonstrating the economic and social advantages of IT and providing 'best practices' on how to involve the eXcluded.

Key elements of the track are the film 'Challenges of Change to an eIncluded society' and the eReadiness Monitor. The latter provides an overview on how countries around the world perform with regard to eInclusion. In order to help countries to score better in this field, the Netherlands will present the 'Declaration of Amsterdam', containing practical tools that countries can use. The Declaration of Amsterdam has been put together with the help of young people.

Furthermore, international and Dutch 'best practices' show how we can work together (public-private: government, industry, NGOs, young people, adults, etc) on an eIncluded society. At WCIT these 'best practices' will be showing different approaches to eInclusion, such as:

- The great market potential of eInclusion;
- The information side of eInclusion: media literacy, the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communication in a variety of contexts;
- Why isn't everyone eIncluded? Shouldn't we adapt the technique to the user rather than the other way around?;
- eIncluded education: using IT in education;
- eIncluded industry: How do we ensure that companies have and keep the right IT knowledge on board, so that it will not be necessary to bring in IT consultants?;
- and: What will happen when the percentage of onliners of the world population increases (now 23%)?

An Introduction to eInclusion

IT offers many opportunities to advance social participation and to achieve economic progress. It can also help to solve social problems and contribute to a better life. It is certainly not just the technique that is important, but the applications it makes possible. By using digital applications, everybody can participate in a society that is becoming more and more digitalized, and at the same time improve the quality of their lives. It is not only the right skills that are important, but the whole process. Social innovation which focuses on what users have in common is essential, too.

As the European Commission writes in 'eUnion, the new IT agenda 2015', the message is 'everybody must participate!' But how do we bring that about on a worldwide scale? And how do we avoid the exclusion of certain groups? How do we persuade people not to look at eInclusion as a problem, but as a great challenge? This issue must be considered in a global perspective, so that countries, governments, organizations and people can learn from each other and together contribute to a better world.

Solutions

Different futures - different challenges of change

How do we emphasize on a global level the importance of eInclusion as a challenge? How do we activate countries on this issue? How do we open their eyes to the 'Challenges of Change' for an eIncluded society'? How do we provide them with tools for an eIncluded future?

Inspiration through film

The film 'Challenges of Change to an eIncluded Society', shows the consequences of eXclusion, now and in the future, for different countries, groups, people and user applications, and therefore from different perspectives and in relation to different environmental factors. Of course, it also shows what it means to be eIncluded. Because of his image of being socially involved, Bill Clinton would make a great candidate to host this movie.

eReadiness Monitor
The current eReadiness Monitor of IBM and ETU assesses countries on various aspects such as connectivity and technology infrastructure, market environment, social, cultural and legal environment, vision and policies of the government, consumer and industry adaptation. The idea is to extend the eReadiness Monitor with an assessment on eInclusion. The monitor will provide an overview on how various countries perform with regard to eInclusion and through that information, inspire countries to enhance participation in the digitalized society.

Declaration of Amsterdam
Alongside the eReadiness Monitor, WCIT will also offer the Declaration of Amsterdam. European youngsters will be involved in the section on eInclusion, to share their views on what is needed to stimulate participation in the digitalized society. The reason for involving youngsters is because transfer of knowledge takes place not only from the old to the young, but from the young to the old too, especially where e-skills are concerned. The Declaration of Amsterdam will contain practical tools that enable countries to enhance eInclusion.

Challenges of a changing society
International and Dutch 'best practices' show how we can work together (public-private: government, industry, NGOs, youngsters, adults, etc) on an eIncluded society. At WCIT these 'best practices' will be placed in the framework of the many environmental factors which differ per country and will focus on the importance of the 'human factor'. The eXcluded also deserve attention: is it just the technology which causes these people not to participate? Shouldn't we simply adapt the technique to the user rather than the other way around? Nicolas Negroponte (One Laptop per Child) could provide a good speech on the subject.

In addition, there should be attention for the fact that this subject also involves the IT industry, not only because of its duty to show social involvement and accountability, but also because it offers a great chance for a new market. We must make clear that eInclusion is actually a promising business case and has great market potential. The Dutch University of Groningen carries out research on the economic value of IT.

The handling of IT (involving all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, printed media, the internet and all other new digital communication technologies) is also of great importance. How do you process the information you receive from the various media? People should be able to analyze and evaluate images, sounds and texts in a proper way. They should learn to deal critically with media, a quality known as 'media literacy'. Media literacy is the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communication in a variety of contexts. The European Commission considers media literacy to be an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society. The Dutch Media Literacy Expert Centre can provide input in this respect.

Vice versa: Applying IT in the learning process leads to optimal results. Think, for example, of the influence of IT on learning. Integrating IT in education has many benefits. Best practices will show the audience this importance and will motivate them to use IT in education.

But look at it from another perspective: Why is it useful to have digital skills? And, logically following from this question: why should the number of eSkilled people increase? And what are the consequences? (in comparison: what if all people drive a car?). What will the next generation of 'onliners' do? What will happen when the percentage of onliners of the world population increases (now 23%)? A speaker in this field could be Gordon Brown.

International best practices:
- Ministries of Education in various countries tell about their best practices
- Disabled people studying through the Internet (Great Britain)
- Put a few computers in the street and children will be eIncluded within a week (India)
- Desmond Tutu, who brought the computer to Africa with his campaign 'Close the Gap'.

Dutch Best practices:

Cyberouders [Cyberparents] (VOO), Multimediaal digivaardighedenprogramma [digital skills program] (ETV), Computerwijk [Computer Area] (Microsoft), Computerplusbus (KPN), Mybee (KPN/Mijn kind online) [My child online], STRAS, DOK Delft (Library), Mooiste Contact Fonds
[the most beautiful contact fund](KPN).

eSkills for a changing society
How do we ensure that companies have and keep the right IT knowledge on board, so that it will not be necessary to bring in IT consultants?

European Component
By presenting many European best practices, Europe is well represented in the track eInclusion.

eInclusion related to the European Commission i2010 future Roadmap
The EC writes that Europe must increase it's innovativeness, by raising the amount of new business and markets for innovative IT applications, seeking leadership in key IT markets, technologies and sciences, and improving the attractiveness of Europe to IT investments and talents, while ensuring critical mass of human capital to build a digital Europe. This can't be done without an eIncluded society. Moreover, the EC also sees a need for better integrated policies and actions bridging IT innovation, skills development and research (knowledge triangle) – from frontier to application oriented research. In this way, the European Commission underlines the importance of eInclusion, eSkills and Media Literacy.

Declaration of Amsterdam
The Netherlands wants to give the world a practical tool to enable other countries to further eInclusion. These tools will be added to the Declaration. European youngsters will make a valuable contribution to the Declaration.

Conclusion
The eInclusion track of WCIT 2010 aims to inspire countries, governments, organizations and individuals to work on creating an inclusive knowledge society by stimulating all citizens to participate in a digitalized society. The European Commission included this mission in the 'eUnion'. The goal of the track is to let the world think about persuading people not to look at eInclusion as a problem, but as a great challenge. The track shows the economic and social advantages of IT and how to involve the eXcluded.

eInclusion is interpreted in its broad definition involving different approaches to eInclusion, from market potential to media literacy. At the same time, we ask ourselves: Why should everyone be eIncluded?

By bringing eInclusion to WCIT 2010 this issue is placed in a global perspective, so that countries, governments, organizations and people can learn from each other and together contribute to a better world.