



Ministerial Debate on e-Inclusion Policy

Lisbon, 2-3 December 2007

Presidency Conclusions

Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, José Mariano Gago, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding, other EU ministers and governmental representatives, and representatives from various stakeholders met in Lisbon on the 2nd and 3rd of December 2007 for a Ministerial Debate on e-Inclusion Policy, co-organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the EU and the European Commission, and coinciding with the United Nations' day of persons with disabilities.

Further to the discussions and the Ministerial debate, the EU Portuguese Presidency:

1. WELCOMES:

- **The Communication from the Commission on a European Initiative on e-Inclusion – “To be part of the Information Society” (COM(2007)694) and the awareness campaign “e-Inclusion, be part of it!” to be concluded by a conference end 2008.**

2. RECALLS

- **The Communications “i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment” COM(2005)229, “e-Accessibility” COM(2005)425, “Bridging the Broadband Gap” COM(2006)129, “i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All” COM(2006)173, “Ageing Well in the Information Society” COM(2007)332, “E-skills for the 21st century: Fostering Competitiveness, Growth and Jobs” COM(2007) 496.**
- **The Riga Ministerial Declaration on ICT for an Inclusive Society of June 2006.**

- **The Council Conclusions of 7 June 2007 on the i2010 - Annual Information Society Report 2007, notably its references to e-Inclusion, and the Council Conclusions of 29 November 2007 on Ageing Well in the Information Society.**

3. RECOGNISES THAT:

- **Promoting e-Inclusion is a major European objective, since information and communication technologies (ICT) are an essential instrument for economic and social progress for all. A more inclusive information society is a fundamental part of the response to pressing economic, demographic and cultural challenges in Europe and the world.**
- **Despite many important efforts and initiatives to improve e-inclusion that have led to considerable progress, significant digital divides still persist. In particular, marked differences regarding regular internet use and digital competences persist in correlation with socio-demographic variables such as education attainment level, income, age and gender. Many barriers remain for people with disabilities and for the elderly to use ICT, including insufficient accessibility of websites, emergency services and broadcasting services.**
- **Further action is therefore necessary from all stakeholders to improve e-Inclusion in Europe. Efforts must focus on enabling the conditions for the use of ICT, on accelerating effective participation of individuals lagging behind in the information society, especially those at risk of social exclusion, and on integrating actions across policy domains and stakeholders' agendas.**

4. The Presidency therefore CALLS UPON

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MINISTERS TO:

- **Integrate e-inclusion as a new dimension of social policies and as an important opportunity to promote social inclusion and to focus national policies and EU instruments aimed at social integration and socio-economic development.**
- **Continue working to improve e-Inclusion in the European Union, in line with the principles, goals and targets of i2010 and the Riga Ministerial Declaration, in close co-ordination with other stakeholders, and build up European leadership on e-Inclusion also in the international scene.**

- **Address e-Accessibility barriers, by strengthening, monitoring and facilitating compliance of requirements in this area.**
 - **Bridge digital competences gaps, mobilising the necessary resources, including through specific actions in rural areas, and specific training programmes for targeted groups.**
 - **Encourage effective participation of individuals lagging behind in the information society, especially those at risk of social exclusion, elderly people and older workers, persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, marginalised young people and migrants at risk of exclusion.**
 - **Mainstream e-Inclusion across national policies for social inclusion, and enhance co-ordination between government, industry and the civil society, notably in relation to actions on e-Government, e-Health, e-Education and ageing well in the information society, in particular paying attention to the driving role that these may have for inclusion as well as for providing of relevance to citizens.**
 - **Stimulate investment and partnerships to establish Europe as a leader in e-inclusion research. In particular, pursue rapid agreement with the European Parliament on the new research Joint Programme on Ambient Assisted Living aimed at enhancing the quality of life of older people through the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT), under Article 169 of the EU Treaty, following the Council agreement of 23 November 2007.**
 - **Promote international cooperation on e-Inclusion to bridge global digital divides and reinforce partnerships with other regions of the world, including Africa, Latin-America and the Caribbean.**
 - **Take part during 2008 in the campaign “e-Inclusion, be part of it!” and the associated Ministerial Conference at the end 2008, reporting on progress, sharing national efforts, and stimulating further action.**
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