Limassol e-Inclusion Report:

Vision, priorities and actions for e-Inclusion Beyond i2010

**A report produced by the i2010 e-Inclusion Subgroup
as a result of its meeting in Limassol, Cyprus,
on 7-8 April, 2009**

June 2009

*This version of the report is provisional while it awaits endorsement
by the i2010 High Level Group.*

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ANNEXES and ENCLOSURES:

1. INTRODUCTION

The e-inclusion Subgroup of the i2010 High Level Group held its 11th meeting in Limassol, Cyprus, on 7 and 8 April 2009. 26 delegates from 21 European countries, five Commission officials and six representatives from four organisations of stakeholders attended the meeting (see attached presence list).

In line with the mandate of the Subgroup, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and form a consensus on future e-inclusion policy orientations. This should contribute to the preparations of the next European strategy on the information society, to succeed the i2010 initiative.

> **e-Inclusion Definition**
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> *e-Inclusion means both inclusive ICT and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion objectives*
>
> (Ministerial Declaration on an "inclusive information society", Riga, June 2006)

In preparation for the meeting, several representatives from European countries and stakeholders organisations submitted position papers.

The current report reflects the outcome from the above meeting, and the previous preparatory work. The representatives from the European countries present at this meeting have had the opportunity to comment on the draft report that the Commission services compiled, and its final version was agreed by consensus, in view to be submitted to the i2010 High Level Group for comment and final approval.

2. THE VISION: WHERE TO GO

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can deliver positive socio-economic outcomes when incorporated into the daily practices of individuals and organisations. ICT infrastructures and equipment are not an end in themselves but must be the conduit of valuable services and tangible opportunities for people. Ensuring that this happens is the core contribution of e-Inclusion policies to the future of the European Information Society.

Today a consensus is emerging around the idea that broad-based growth is the main way to real and solid and sustainable prosperity. e-Inclusion aims at using ICT to turn societal challenges into individual and business opportunities, while at the same time producing ethically desirable outcomes. The "Study on Inclusive Innovation for Growth and Cohesion: Modelling and demonstrating the impact of e-Inclusion"[1], prepared as an input to the ministerial conference on e-Inclusion held in Vienna in 2008 (hereafter referred to as the "Vienna Study") provided evidence on the economic and social benefits of increasing digital inclusion directly ("helping people use ICT") or indirectly ("using ICT to help people"). e-Inclusion, through empowering individuals and communities is one of the key elements of restoring durable and sustainable economic growth.

Following the Riga Declaration[2], the vision of the i2010 e-inclusion Subgroup is to design and propose e-Inclusion policies, and support initiatives, aimed at empowering the individual. With people as a focal point, technology can help achieve wide social and economic gains. In the "post-i2010" European policy on the Information Society, e-Inclusion must continue to sit at the core, as part of a demand-driven approach seeking to stimulate growth while fostering social cohesion.

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/library/studies/eco_impact/index_en.htm

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/events/riga_2006/index_en.htm

To deliver on key socio-economic policy goals, it is now more important than ever to mainstream and coordinate a European-wide e-Inclusion policy. This will call for a holistic approach integrating initiatives across policies at all levels (central, regional and local), inter-disciplinary expertise and coordination amongst relevant stakeholders (public and private sectors, NGOs, academia and research constituency, etc.) through a participative and networked process. Moreover, the users (the empowered individuals) should play an important role in the design and implementation of public policies and services. The current recession implies less revenue from taxation, increased spending on unemployment benefits and other welfare measures, and support for strategic industries in difficulty. Social innovation meeting social needs can cope with these challenges, as underscored in the *Renewed Social Agenda*[3]. The public sector policies and initiatives in the e-Inclusion domain should be a catalyst for social innovation, engaging the commercial and non-government organisations in the delivery of inclusive ICT, helping all to benefit from associated economic and social gains.

While bringing a new flavour and new priorities, this vision naturally builds upon, and aims to fully realise, the objectives from previous European policy initiatives relevant to e-Inclusion[4]:

- 2005: e-Inclusion is one of the three pillars of i2010

- 2006: Ministerial Conference in Riga / Declaration on e-Inclusion: political commitment from more than 30 European countries on 6 priority areas; some quantitative targets

- 2007: e-Inclusion Communication setting overall Commission strategy

- 2007: ICT for ageing Communication (key component of e-Inclusion) setting strategy in this area

- 2008: Co-decision by the European Parliament and Council on the participation of the Community in the Ambient Assisted Living Joint R&D Programme

- 2008: ICT for e-accessibility (key component of e-Inclusion) setting strategy in this area

- 2008: European e-Inclusion initiative/ campaign "e-Inclusion: be part of it!"

3. CHALLENGES, PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Since the launch of the eEurope Action plan at the beginning of this decade, a rapid uptake of ICT has occurred. However, the pace of uptake now appears to be stalling. More than 40% of EU population still do not regularly use the Internet.

> **Delay in reaching Riga targets**
>
> At the current pace, some of the Riga targets may not be reached until 2015:
>
> - The disparity gap in Internet usage by vulnerable vs. mainstream groups is still at 38%
> - The same applies for the gap in digital literacy
> - Usage and literacy are noticeably lower among the elderly, low educated, unemployed
> - only 5% of public websites are accessible
> - Many rural areas are not yet served by broadband in the same way as urban areas (coverage, speed, prices)

Evidence shows that digital inequalities are correlated with social ones (related to age, education, income, job status, education, culture and ethnicity, disability, etc) and, if not effectively addressed, will feed into a negative loop where digital and social exclusion reinforce each other.

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[3] European Commission. (2008a). *Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe*. Brussels. COM(2008), 412 final, available at http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547&langId=en

[4] All these documents are available at http://ec.europa.eu/einclusion

Data on digital literacy suggests that, as basic access to ICT increases, other forms of differentiation and inequalities may arise - being able to just 'do' e-mail is not enough. "Second order digital divides" restrict individuals from realising desirable economic and social benefits.

Persistence of digital exclusion stems from a number of factors, such as: Economic (e.g. lack of coverage due to market failure, no access due to lack of affordability); Technical (e.g. ICT not accessible/ user-friendly/ adjustable to personal needs); Human (e.g. lack of skills, no awareness of benefits, lack of confidence).

At the Limassol meeting, the i2010 e-inclusion subgroup identified a series of issues for future actions to improve e-inclusion. Those issues can be grouped under four major challenges:

- **Improve ICT access and skills** to stimulate greater use

- **Address the ageing trend** by promoting ICT-enabled solutions

- **Enhance accessibility and personalisation** to foster equality and inclusive ICT markets

- **Improve coordination and implementation** of e-Inclusion measures for greater impact

For each of the challenges outlined above, this report briefly recalls the background, then identifies priorities and recommends actions at local, national or European level.

3.1. Challenge 1: Improve ICT access and skills to stimulate use

3.1.1. Background

Evidence in Europe and North America shows that broadband uptake makes a difference to growth and competitiveness. In Europe, we have seen rapid broadband roll-out and have achieved the Riga target of 90% of the European population able to access broadband. Despite this, there are still areas without (affordable) broadband. Moreover, actual uptake and use lags well behind availability.

A more e-competent population means empowered individuals that are more confident and capable of acquiring new information and knowledge, which can be translated into relevant skills in the information society

> **ICT and jobs**
>
> - 90% per cent of new jobs require ICT skills.
> - ICT skills enable effective job searching, increased employability and business start-up
> - Many jobs are now advertised solely online and recruitment processes are increasingly electronic, excluding many potential workers
> - In the age group 50-65, having ICT skills increases employability by 20% compared to not having them
> - Economic research shows that there is a 3% to 10% per cent wage premium for jobs involving ICT skills, which is a measure of the increased productivity that such skills entail.
>
> Source: Vienna study

and knowledge economy, and ultimately into tangible benefits. The (positive) link between digital skills and labour market outcomes is for the moment the main area (in terms of e-Inclusion domain) where systematic, empirical evidence is available.

Cultural diversity and mobility of European citizens also need to be better addressed, supporting multilingual/localized adapted content and services to meet the needs and aspirations of different people. Efforts in this direction, including through self-service/content production, will also contribute to integration, employability, and new market creation.

There are already many successful initiatives around Europe addressing these issues. For instance, Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) or more advanced establishments offering access and assistance (like Telecentres) as well as the use of school establishments for activating various social and age groups have spread rapidly in recent years in most European countries. They

represent an invaluable asset and the foundation to further spread digital inclusion. There are also multiple digital literacy initiatives across Europe, and many interventions to stimulate ICT use in general. However, these actions are often scattered, and evidence of their real impact is missing. Moreover, exclusion factors are often not addressed in an integrated fashion, i.e. tackling basic access issues combined with measures for encouraging usage based on interests and motivations targeted at particular vulnerable groups.

3.1.2. Priorities and recommended actions: targeted interventions on broadband, ICT literacy and community support

Ensure equity of quality and baseline 100% broadband coverage in Europe (e.g. the UK is proposing a Universal Service obligation for broadband). Then, ensure the "pipes" are carrying content and services that people need, want, and where appropriate, are willing to pay for. Use the opportunity of the switchover to digital broadcasting, which is already well advanced across Europe, to deliver information society services and the benefits that ICT can offer to the hard-to-reach parts of the society. Roll out of mobile broadband and especially addressing the issue of roaming charges is also of relevance.

- **National funds and the proposed €1bn EU investment in broadband should be carefully targeted to contribute to the Riga e-inclusion targets. The switchover to digital broadcasting should be used to integrate new segments of the population in the information society.**

Support the acquisition and improvement of digital skills for job and (life long) learning purposes, as an investment in human capital and a means to respond to the current economic crisis. This should contribute to increased labour market participation and reduction of unemployment costs, improved productivity of those at work enhancing competitiveness and stimulating business. In particular, keeping the "young elderly" at work can help relieve pressures on pension systems.

Intervention measures should link digital training to concrete jobs and training-related objectives and target well defined audiences (e.g. marginalised youth or older workers), if possible involving all relevant administrations (e.g. responsible for labour, education, etc) and stakeholders. Multi-lingual and localised content and services should be provided, as appropriate, to better reach intended beneficiaries of e-Inclusion actions.

- **Initiatives on digital training should be better coordinated across administration departments, tailored to the needs of their intended beneficiaries, and oriented towards tangible impacts on employability or other positive outcomes.**

Enable ICT community centres, such as Telecentres, and other multipliers to fully play their role of local ICT ambassadors and to scale up into substantial community centres, encouraging local populations to start accessing and then using ICT for basic browsing, then for more substantive needs, culture, leisure and entertainment. Such centres should be embedded deeply into the local level contexts, contributing to address policies challenges. They can become the virtual and physical space for social innovation, which occurs where resources from the private and third sectors can be leveraged together with public funding.

- **The role of local community ICT centres should be supported e.g. in terms of (1) networking at local level (better co-ordination of local initiatives, NGOs, etc) and international level (to share experience and build evidence of impact); (2) professional recognition of staff where appropriate (giving them a status of 'care givers', 'social assistants' or other); (3) promotion and bottom up awareness by 'eMentors', local 'eChampions' or similar approaches.**

- **The European Commission should explore best means of ensuring availability of basic access to localised digital content and services for all citizens thus fostering cultural diversity and mobility in Europe.**

3.2. Challenge 2: Address the ageing trend by promoting ICT-enabled solutions

3.2.1. Background

Older people can, and often do want to remain active (in terms of paid and unpaid work) in society but they often stand out as a neglected policy target. The elderly are also a large market segment for ICT products or ICT based services not yet being substantially addressed by industry – the main barriers being accessibility and usability issues as well as overall customer support.

> **Ageing - a multifaceted challenge**
> - Old age dependency ratio will move from 1:4 to 1:2, unless we keep the "young elderly" at work
> - Dramatic gap emerging in available human care resources versus needs
> - Upsurge in chronic disease and need for long term care
> - A large and increasing segment of our society, and potentially the basis for a sizeable and profitable market, at risk of being completely cut out from the many benefits of the Information society.

While the intelligent deployment of ICTs could greatly help European societies to cope with the ageing of the population much still remains to be done to realise this potential. ICT for independent living and personalised health services can increase quality of life and relieve care givers of routine tasks. However, this still remains a relatively niche market due to an array of factors including lack of interoperability, unclear business models and reimbursement schemes, fragmented ownership e.g. between health and social welfare schemes; legal and ethical issues, etc.

Actions to be undertaken under Challenge 2 relating to aged citizens as well as under Challenge 3 on e-Accessibility are directly relevant and will greatly benefit the disabled population in Europe – particularly in terms of equal access to ICT based goods and services, access to employment and education, improved independence and quality of life.

3.2.2. Priorities and recommended actions: ICT for ageing at work, in the community, at home

Systematically and holistically harness ICT to address the ageing challenge, improving quality of life for the elderly, ensuring the sustainability of the European social model (healthcare, welfare, pensions, social security), and creating new business opportunities. In particular, take further action in the following areas:

Longer work lives: support the 50-65 age group to prolong their work lives, as a means to increase their income and personal satisfaction, as well as ease and delay burden on pension systems.

- **Measures should be adopted for ICT to be an enabler rather than a barrier for longer and balanced work lives, e.g. ad-hoc digital training, more friendly work environments and solutions such as telework, user-friendly tools for collaborative work environment, assistive technologies and services.**

Active ageing: empower the elderly as mobile, active and socially engaged citizens and consumers, also of ICT goods and services (a sizeable and largely untapped market segment).

- **Mainstream ICT products and services should be user-friendly, accessible and usable for a wide customer base, based on a design for all approach with dedicated support as**

appropriate. Notably, TV and telephones, as familiar platforms for the elderly, should be fully exploited as vehicles of inclusive e-services. Fragmented approaches in this regard should be avoided.

Quality care and independence: improve interoperability as well as promote innovative business and reimbursement models allowing for the deployment of ICT-enabled solutions. Support that effort with joined up action across policy domains (e.g. social and healthcare). This should help to scale up the market for ICT supported independent living, mobility and personalised health monitoring, and improve quality of life while relieving the burden on social and health care.

- **ICT-enabled solutions for social/healthcare and independent living should be stimulated through support to interoperability and business initiatives in this area, including as appropriate adaptations of social security/ health schemes. An overview of existing ageing well initiatives across Europe should be made and networking of key stakeholders should be supported.**

3.3. Challenge 3: From accessibility to personalisation – fostering equality and inclusive ICT markets

3.3.1. Background

e-Accessibility is very important for ICT use in general and remains one of the key barriers for many people to participate in the information society.

Evidence shows that accessible and inclusive design of ICTs benefits all, linking up to personalisation trend. Already pursued for health related products and services, **personalisation** in technology design puts the consumers at the centre and seeks to offer a product or service capable of supporting each individual by recognising and building upon their diverse strengths, interests, abilities and needs. The outcome is delivering usable, accessible products and services with good customer support service, where appropriate.

There has been progress since the Riga declaration:

- Political commitment in many countries is much greater, including the adoption of legislative measures and obligations in some.

- Increased awareness and delivery of accessible ICT products and services by key stakeholders, including industry players both as providers and users of ICTs.

- In particular, web accessibility is becoming a high priority in several countries, and the recent adoption by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) of the second version of their Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) provides a new momentum.

> **Many missed customers with disabilities; illustrative data for UK**
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> - 10 million disabled people, of whom 6.9 million of working age (19 % of work force)
> - One third of 50-64 year olds have some form of disability (70% of disabled people become disabled during their working lives)
> - 14% of those working in small to medium sized companies have a disability
> - Inaccessible online recruitment cuts out 1.3 million talented disabled individuals
> - Disabled people have an estimated spending power of £80bn p.a., of which 83% walk away from purchases due to lack of accessibility of either physical locations or eCommerce websites

Despite these positive developments, real improvement of e-Accessibility requires greater efforts. Among the Riga targets, the one on web accessibility registers the poorest performance. Overall

progress on e-accessibility in Europe remains slow, and still not satisfactory on three accounts, as identified in the study "Measuring E-Accessibility in Europe" (MEAC)[5]:

- "The eAccessibility deficit": a large number of people with disabilities continue to be confronted with many barriers to use mainstream ICT products and services, e.g. telephony, TV, web, computers and self-service terminals.

- "The eAccessibility gap": the situation in Europe as a whole compares unfavourably with that of some foreign countries analysed in the above reports (Australia, Canada and the United States of America).

- "The eAccessibility patchwork": across Europe there are important differences regarding the accessibility of ICT different products and services, as well as wide disparities between Member States. Incoherent approaches lead to fragmented and inefficient markets and hamper progress.

Accessibility of ICT, and ICT-based, products and services at the work place and in other daily life contexts, remains a challenge. The market for inclusive and accessible ICT remains very fragmented and prices are often very high.

It must be recalled that people with permanent or temporary disabilities represent a sizeable part of the population and thus a large number of citizens, potential customers and employees in Europe. Also, they are beneficiaries of equal rights and non discrimination policies and provisions in many countries and at EU level.

3.3.2. Priorities: coordinate efforts and provide evidence of impact

Deliver more accessible, user-friendly, personalised and accessible ICT products and services (web, self-service terminals, TV equipment and content, etc.), reducing fragmentation and technical complexity for the benefit of all. In particular, consider inclusion aspects like accessibility and usability as part of the requirements for high quality ICT-enabled public services. Also, consult and involve end-users in the design and appraisal of those services.

One of the means to stimulate and promote **"culture of accessibility"** from the start could be through programmes in schools. The possible role of the Commission would be through networking best practices and actions (i.e.: guidelines for a systemic approach in the school towards accessibility/usability; toolkits for creation of accessible digital educational content by both teachers and pupils etc.).

Specifically on web accessibility, the recent adoption of the WCAG 2.0 provides an opportunity for a common approach to web accessibility across Europe. The new guidelines can however be challenging to implement; guidance and support measures would be useful. An approach with several layers of implementation can be envisaged, e.g. with common guidance at EU level and detailed implementation aspects left to the national level. The Council of the EU recently called the Commission for a recommendation on web accessibility, which would provide the mentioned guidance at EU level.

- **Recommendations for quality of ICT-enabled public services, particularly online services, should include eAccessibility criteria. Specifically, the Commission could propose a recommendation on web accessibility supporting, among other priorities, the implementation of WCAG 2.0 in the EU. End-users should be involved in the formulation and monitoring of those recommendations.**

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[5] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/library/studies/meac_study/index_en.htm

Target and adapt public intervention on e-Accessibility according to the needs and capacities of groups concerned, and the barriers they face. This entails protecting the most vulnerable social groups, e.g. through equal rights action and sector-specific legislation as appropriate; whilst encouraging and empowering those people who just need some form of support.

- **The United Nations Convention on persons with disabilities should be implemented, including its provisions on ICT. eAccessibility should be addressed in the framework of the Commission proposal for a Directive on equal (non-discriminatory) access to goods and services.**

- **The relevant EU institutions should adopt as soon as possible the revised electronic communications (Telecoms) Directives. Member States should ensure the effective implementation of the provisions on people with disabilities included in the Audio-visual Media Services Directive.[6] The switch-over to digital broadcasting provides a unique opportunity to mainstream accessibility of TV equipment and content.**

Foster the single EU internal market for innovative inclusive and assistive ICTs by mainstreaming inclusion and personalisation features from the design stage, to be preferred over tailored assistive technology solutions added on top of average ICT products. For that, public authorities should use various instruments at their disposal, such as public procurement and structural funds. Encouraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be a key ingredient in favouring a business environment towards inclusive outcomes and could provide an effective approach to encouraging possible investment in digital inclusion.

- **Standards for interoperability of inclusive and assistive ICT should be further promoted. Notably, ongoing work of 'Mandate 376'[7] on public procurement of accessible ICT should be supported, including through the creation of national mirror groups. EU toolkits on accessibility requirements in the use of EU structural funds and in public procurement should be implemented.**

Pursue EU support to R&D and deployment as a contribution to real impact in terms of accessible and personalised products for end-users.

- **EU financing for R&D and deployment should address key eAccessibility areas, e.g. plug and play/ interoperable solutions, human-machine interaction, personalisation, etc. Software developers and content authors should be encouraged in that direction, and the possibilities of open source approaches fully exploited.**

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[6] The Commission adopted proposals for a reform of the EU telecom rules in 2007. They contain several provisions on person with disabilities, which aim at providing these people with the same benefits from use of modern electronic communication services as the rest of the population. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS) aims amongst other to make audiovisual content increasingly accessible for the sight and the hearing impaired. Governments must encourage media companies under their jurisdiction to do this, e.g. so that they provide subtitling and audio description.

[7] The European Commission issued Mandate M/376 to the European Standards Organisations (ESOs) to enable the use of public procurement and practice for ICT to remove barriers to participation in the Information Society by disabled and older people. It is approaching its second phase which shall result in a European Standard with functional requirements on ICT accessibility as well as support material to assist public ICT procurers in incorporating accessibility in their procurement processes.

3.4. Challenge 4: Improve coordination and implementation of e-Inclusion measures for greater impact

3.4.1. Background

e-Inclusion, and social inclusion in general, is a multi-dimensional issue that must be tackled through comprehensive approaches, calling for coordination across policy domains (labour market, education, social and economic measures, etc). This concerns all levels of public administration and the rest of the "policy delivery value chain" (including commercial and third sector organisations).

There are several policy domains at EU level relevant to e-Inclusion and a large number of related initiatives and instruments that concern the topics discussed so far in this report. A similar picture, however more complex and diversified, exists at national, regional and local levels. In addition to the policy complexity, the e-Inclusion field is characterised by a multiplicity of stakeholders and interests: private sector, third sector, users associations, formal and informal intermediaries, etc. In such context, initiatives and efforts often overlap, synergies are not fully exploited; this leaves a big potential for improving actions and their impact.

At European level, the orientations in current policies and activities related to e-Inclusion, referred above in the section "the vision" of this report, remain broadly valid and appropriate. They should be further pursued and adapted. It should also be noted that the deadline for achieving the goals in the 2006 Riga Ministerial declaration expires in 2010, as will the i2010 initiative.

It is also very important that the opportunities and benefits from e-Inclusion are effectively demonstrated and communicated, also at the most senior levels in politics, business and civil society. Such opportunities and benefits can be supported through various types of arguments, e.g.:

- Sustainability of public finances: e.g. Increased use of online public services generate efficiency gains for public administration; Harnessing ICT for active and independent living reduces/offsets social and health care costs and increases the sustainability of welfare models; Greater digital skills help reduce unemployment and related subsidies and increases growth and generate tax revenues.

- Business opportunities from untapped markets and spending power: e.g. Consumption related to ICT and ICT-enabled consumer goods, smart homes, independent living products and services etc; Greater ICT consumption boosts ICT and related industries (including content production/delivery), particularly when personalised design and after sales support is available.

- Individual empowerment: e.g. Enhanced employability and self determination; Living more independently for longer; Greater (and different) social and economic participation opportunities.

3.4.2. Priorities and recommended actions: coordination, awareness, investment

Maintain over time and adapt as appropriate strategic orientations on e-Inclusion; then concentrate on effective delivery of agreed objectives and their impact, with central leadership ensuring coordination across administration departments, e.g. a senior coordinating figure at national and EU level. In so doing, mainstream ICT as an enabler to better achieve social and economic objectives in relevant policies and programmes at European, national or regional level.

Support the 'professionals' (authorities, intermediaries and multipliers) to improve their competences and possibilities of delivering e-inclusion on the ground level. Build the ICT capacity of civil servants as both employees and citizens.

- **At European level, EU Member States and the Commission should review the goals and targets of the 2006 Riga Ministerial Declaration on e-Inclusion.**

- **At national level, horizontal task forces should coordinate actions and favour synergies relating to ICT contribution to broad goals of social inclusion and economic growth. At both national and EU levels a senior figure (Minister, Commissioner) could coordinate e-Inclusion actions across policy portfolios and along value chains. Also 'e-Inclusion professionals' should be duly acknowledged and given the means for efficient action.**

Monitor progress on e-Inclusion through an 'open method of coordination' approach in which e.g. countries set general principles/targets, regions develop and implement strategies and action plans, the EU supports/ coordinates reporting and benchmarking. Systematic benchmarking and evaluation should be reinforced, not only at the level of ICT surveys but also of "mainstream" social and economic policies, through common measurement indicators for e-Inclusion. Exchange good practice on e-Inclusion initiatives in order to identify critical measures and success factors, then enable transfer of successful practices.

- **Progress on e-Inclusion goals and targets should be monitored through a common open method of coordination/building on shared benchmarking and best practice approaches.**

Gather and showcase evidence of e-Inclusion opportunities and positive impact, including economic impact and added value from action at the European level, to justify further action. Collaborate on common socio-economic and user assessment measurement, e.g. through 'benchlearning' pilots where agencies/projects from different countries share experiences on key drivers and barriers, and jointly elaborate and measure impact indicators. Communicate benefits and key messages to the general public in clear and appealing ways as well as organise relevant events targeted at professionals (local authorities, teachers, carers, NGOs, businesses, etc.) to assist them in delivering e-Inclusion on the ground.

- **Evidence of e-Inclusion opportunities and positive impact should be gathered and effectively communicated.**

Promote socio-economic and cross disciplinary research addressing the benefits of accessible, usable and personalized ICT through holistic approaches. Further investigate behavioural aspects of technology adoption, human-machine interaction, inclusive ambient intelligence (e.g. considering the potential of the "internet of things" and RFIDs). Reinforce in the preparation and evaluation of proposals for EU projects (research projects, CIP pilots) the requirements on user impact and empowerment, socioeconomic dimension, contribution to new business models. Ensure strong end-user involvement in research. Showcase ICT inclusiveness through large scale 'living labs' where users test tailored inclusive and accessible ICT solutions.

- **EU support should be increased for research and deployment on socio-economic aspects and personalisation of ICT, with greater end-user involvement in the EU-supported projects.**

Support large scale deployment pilots linking the various segments of the e-Inclusion value chains (e.g. social and health care; education and labour market). Support collaboration between niche assistive technology companies and mainstream ICT industry. Support cross-disciplinary applications of ICT with social and economic impact and test innovative business models. Fill existing gaps in translating research results into market products, e.g. by facilitating SME participation; launching Innovative Actions Programme type of initiatives; stimulating pre-

commercial procurement for large scale innovative and inclusive investments; addressing barriers to participation of certain companies to public procurement. Better evaluate the results and impact of EU projects supporting e-Inclusion (e.g. through the research, CIP and AAL programmes). Better link various EU support instruments, e.g. through the "European Large Scale Actions" aimed at linking RTD, innovation and deployment proposed in the 2009 Commission Communication on the future of ICT research , to support innovative value chains for e-Inclusion.

- **EU-supported projects should address e-Inclusion more comprehensively, linking the various dimensions and stakeholders of e-Inclusion, as well as seeking and evaluating real impact. Market impact should be stimulated, including through public procurement. The various EU support instruments should be better coordinated.**

4. CONCLUSIONS

Digital exclusion, in all its forms, continues to be a significant challenge for all European countries. Higher levels of digital inclusion, i.e. empowering individuals through ICT, and greater use of ICT in service delivery, including health and social care and other public services, offers significant socio-economic benefits which still remain largely untapped. At a time of financial crisis and economic downturn, policies and actions that stimulate growth while supporting the most vulnerable in our society are necessary and call for European, national and local strategies and cooperation.

e-Inclusion has achieved major strides in recent years, although progress against a number of the Riga Declaration targets is not as fast as called for in 2006. Now, more than ever before, addressing digital exclusion and ensuring ICT is used effectively for and by all citizens including the most vulnerable members of our society is a crucial component of economic recovery and social strengthening.

We therefore recommend that the European Commission and European Member States, together with other European institutions, continue working together and intensify efforts in order to:

- Provide strategic leadership by ensuring digital inclusion is a cornerstone of future European information society policy;

- Review the vision and goals set out in the Riga Declaration.

- Mainstream digital inclusion into key policy areas, e.g. education, economic recovery strategy, social cohesion, or health/social care.

- Consider the proposals and suggestions made in this report when shaping future programmes and investments at European and national level.

ANNEX A
Attendance list for e-Inclusion Subgroup Meeting – 7-8 April 2009

Austria
Bulgaria
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Italy
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Slovenia
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
Digital Europe
AGE - the European Older People's Platform
EDF – the European Disability Forum
AEC - Aquitaine Europe Communication
Telecentres Europe
The European Commission

ANNEX B
Meeting Agenda

ANNEX C
Country and stakeholders position and background papers

Both annexes B and C are available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/groups/limassol/index_en.htm