



European SeniorWatch Observatory and Inventory -
*A market study about the specific IST needs of older and disabled people
to guide industry, RTD and policy*

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Chain of Angels

*A computer driven telephone circle
(alarm- and information circle).*

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Chain of Angels. A computer driven telephone circle (alarm- and information circle).....	6
2.1	Description	6
2.2	Analysis	7
2.3	Acknowledgements and links	7

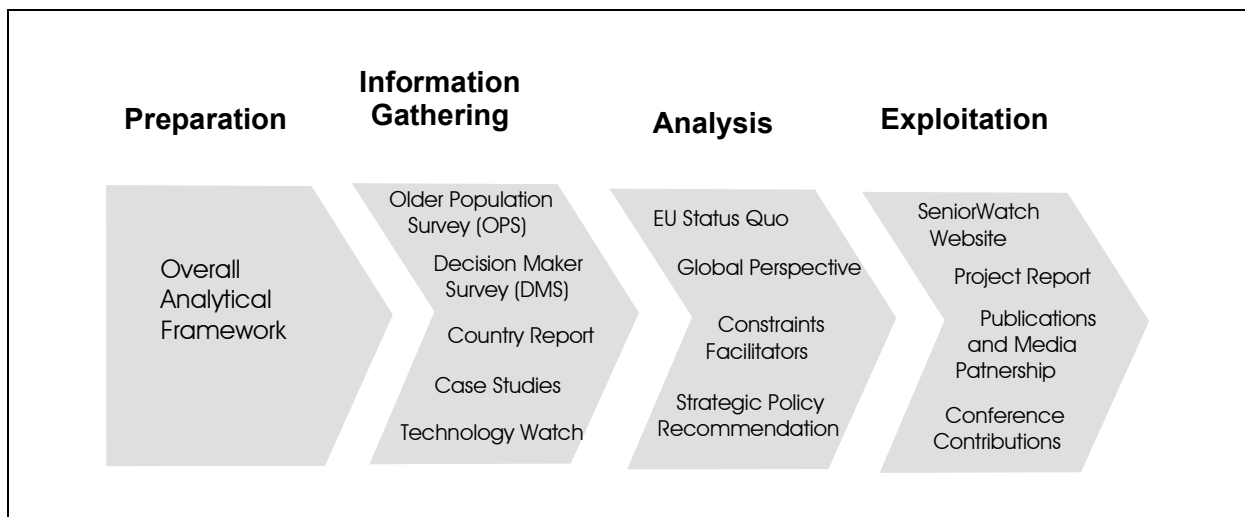
1 Introduction

The SeniorWatch project addresses the need to understand better and to monitor the market dynamics of Information Society Technologies (IST) applications and services targeted at older (and older disabled) citizens. Currently, there is insufficient empirical data about the needs of older citizens which could be met by IST-based applications and services, and a lack of awareness on the part of industry, users and politicians that hampers the rapid exploitation of new market opportunities arising from IST developments. In order to redress this state of affairs SeniorWatch will provide a European single source of empirical information on the market potential of IST-based products and services targeted at older people. The main objectives can be summarised as follows:

- to help and encourage European industry to address the market opportunities, and particularly challenge current competitive advantages of the US industries,
- to enable policy to really influence the current situation and to benchmark achievements between different European regions and countries and to make comparisons with competing world economies (Japan, US) most relevant to the field,
- to inform citizens about what is now possible with the support of IST and, thus, encourage them to demand IST products and services which meet their requirements.

As illustrated by Figure 1-1, these objectives require a comprehensive methodological approach to be applied. On the basis of an overall analytical framework, it integrates a set of complementary research methods such as European-wide surveys of older people and of decision makers in care services, best practice case studies, technology watch work shops and country reports. Synthesising the various types of empirical information gathered with help of these methods will finally enable the project to arrive at an holistic overview, to establish a technology and market observatory, and to derive policy recommendations to accelerate market development. Research results will be exploited by means of different measures.

Figure 1-1: The Project Phases of SeniorWatch



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As part of the project's overall methodological approach the SeniorWatch case studies aim at providing a useful source of information on how the IST-related needs of the target groups in question can adequately be served. They are also intended to help to understand - in a qualitative manner - more deeply specific aspects of the market situation related to IST

products and services relevant for older citizens. To allow a comparative analysis of real-life examples, a common approach for selecting and describing suitable cases was developed. The main selection criteria applied in this context include:

- suitability of the case to provide input to the overall understanding and analysis of the market for IST among older people;
- suitability of the case to serve as an example of a success story (or failure) that can guide and motivate others to take actions that will support the diffusion and take-up of IST by or for older people.

In the following the SeniorWatch case study no.18 is described.

2 Chain of Angels. A computer driven telephone circle (alarm- and information circle).

2.1 Description

New generation telephone circles

Telephone circles exist for a long time and in many communities. The only goal of these circles is safety control and care. One of the results of the contacts with older people in the European Presence project was they mentioned to want to have not only a safety control but also social contacts, and help and advises about many issues. Some more vital seniors noticed that they want to help more frail persons, but they don't know where these persons are and what they want and when.

Another problem of a traditional telephone circle that one person has to call the following one till everyone of the circle has been called. Most of the participants are frail; forgetfulness is not a scarcity. Regularly someone forget to call the other.

The goal of the Chain of Angel-project was to develop a telephone circle, which had to solve these problems and had to be more then only a safety control.

The Chain of Angel-project had to be finished with a user test with 2 x 8 persons, who had used the Chain of Angel during a month. The user test has to be ended prematurely because of problems with the programme of the computer. So there is not a definitive working and tested prototype.

In 1996 Presence was established, with the aim of taking the demographic and social changes of the 'Grey Wave' as a stimulus to innovation. The EC-funded research programme brought together researchers, designers and commercial partners from Norway, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. The philosophy of Presence was: 'designing with, not designing for'.

In 1997 the Presence team set out to challenge stereotypes of older people as predominantly frail, needy and disabled by focusing- on both the social as well as the personal level – on the opportunities presented by ageing.

The team decided to work directly with groups of real people in three 'test communities'. Combining traditional research techniques with new design-driven and user-driven methods, the Presence team mapped the communities in ways that reflect the lives of the local people in terms of their relationships, needs, hopes, fears and aspirations.

The results of the two-year dialogue between designers, researchers and older people led to several projects, carried out by the partners of the Presence project. One of these projects is the Chain of Angel. The wishes of the older users like safety, care, social contacts, security, advice (give and get advice), solving small practical problems have led to the enlargement and automation of the traditional telephone circle. The Netherlands Design Institute developed a programme and a database for a automated telephone circle.

August 1999: start with the user test with the Chain of Angel.

October 1999: End of Chain of Angel with a presentation in the Netherlands Design Institute.

Context

The target group is People older than 50, frail people, who need a daily check if they're alright at one hand, and vital older people, who can help the frail ones with shopping or driving to the hospital etc. at the other hand.

The EC-funded research programme brought together researchers, designers and commercial partners from Norway, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. The philosophy of

Presence was: 'designing with, not designing for'. The Dutch researchteam consisted of The Netherlands Design Institute, project leader of Chain of Angel, and Stephan Productergonomics, performer of the user tests.

2.2 Analysis

Impact

In the dialogue with older people designers learned to ask: "How may we help you?" and starting to ask: "How might we jointly explore how to live?"

Chain of Angel is a good concept to unload professional cares and family cares. Older people help holder people and the computer makes the connection. So it seems to be a good service that care insurers and care organisations should supply.

Failure: the problem was that at the end of the project two things had to be tested: 1) the usage of Chain of Angel with older people and 2) the technique. The technique failed with the result that the user test had to be cancelled. The other problem was that no time and money were found for the Chain of Angel user test after the end of the Presence-project.

Lessons to learn

No mixed tests: not an user test and a technique test at the same time. The technique has to work before user tests start. Reserve time for installing the technique.

It was difficult to find frail seniors for the test group. In order to get very old users for a user test: be careful in mentioning the word 'computer'.

Perspective

At the end of the Presence project in October 1999 there wasn't a financial support anymore to finish the Chain of Angel. Nevertheless the Chain of Angel seems a good concept, as several care insurers were interested in the concept. Additional financial support is needed to continue the development of the concept.

2.3 Acknowledgements and links

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Literature

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