



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

www.seniorwatch.de

IST-1999-29086

Obstacles Away

*A Dutch long term project on the awareness of the
accessibility of internet for people with disabilities
including elderly disabled people.*

Report Version:	1.0 by NPOE
Report Preparation Date:	December 28, 2001
Classification:	<i>public</i>
Contract Start Date:	1 st of October 2000
Duration:	18 Month
Project Co-ordinator:	<i>empirica</i>
Partners:	WRC, STAKES, EURAG, NPOE



Project funded by the European Community under the
"Information Society Technology" Programme (1998-2002)

Short Title

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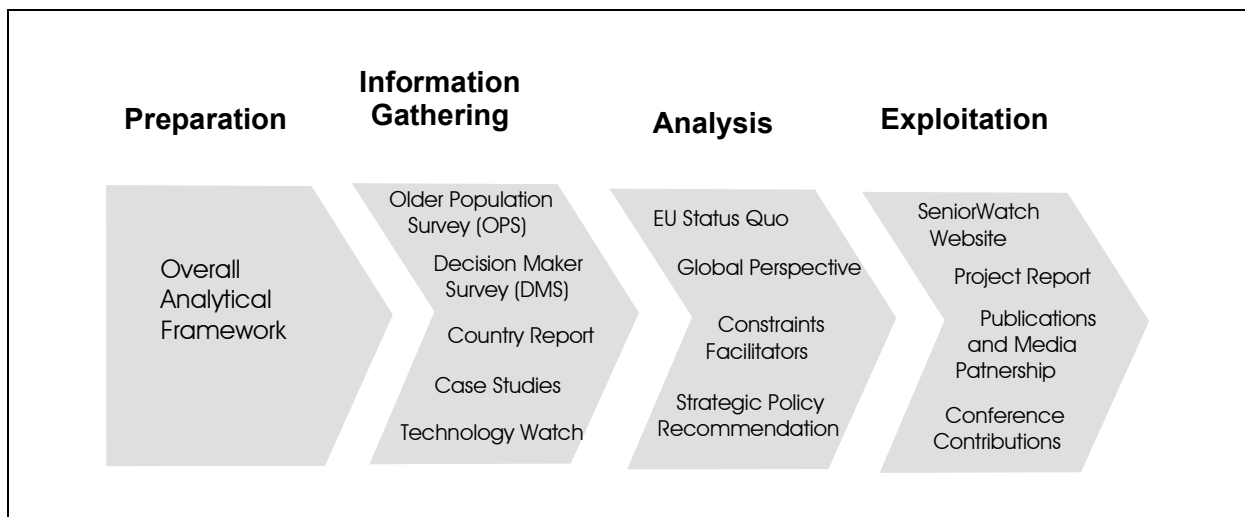
1 Introduction

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



Source: © SeniorWatch, 2001

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.24 is described.

2 Obstacles Away. A Dutch National long term project on the awareness of the accessibility of internet for people with disabilities including elderly disabled people.



figure: logo of Obatacles Away

2.1 Description

The Dutch Government finds it important that all kind of minority groups get the opportunity to become full member of society. This also counts for ICT developments. A number of initiatives have been taken. The project 'Obstacles Away' is the first step to make websites accessible. But also, to stimulate minority groups to go on the web and experience the opportunities. As a second round, Government gives attention to the content of ICT and internet. Therefore, recently, Government has installed a platform ICT to obtain as effective as possible the benefits of ICT in the care sector.



figure: Internet course for blind people

The aim of Obstacles away is to solve the following problems:

- To raise awareness between handicapped and frail elderly people that internet can be a worthwhile possibility to raise the quality of life
- Frail people often are physically handicapped to use internet properly

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- The usability of internet can be better for frail people
- The availability and affordability of internet can be a problem for frail people.

The goal is equal accessibility to internet for all.

The project is a government financed complex promotion on the accessibility of internet, including disabled and elderly. The project is making use of the W3C standards.



figure: W3C is an international standard for websites

In cooperation with people with disabilities, industry and many others, existing websites will be investigated and judged on accessibility and usefulness.

The ultimate goal is to improve the accessibility of the Dutch websites for people with disabilities.

First operational goal is to improve the accessibility of at least 100 important Dutch-orientated websites at the end of 2001.

The project appeals to website builders and owners of websites.

The project is a five year long awareness and stimulation project, costing approximately 1,5 to 2 million euro a year.

There are leaflets, ambassadors who network and create a solid basis of understandments. there is the website, huge public relation and information plan, and service and support for internetproviders and website builders.

The owners of websites sign intention-declarations to improve their websites. They are helped by assessments of their websites.

Long term, the project aims at a change of mentality, permanent awareness and attention.

periodically new themes will be published by the professional PR bureau.

Now, in the second year, also local initiatives of internet users can subscribe for projects en experiments. Therefor a national advisory board has been installed.

The end of the project will be in 2006.

Context

The policy of Dutch government goes is focused at equal rights by stimulating awareness and private initiatives, not by new laws and regulation.

The total of the Dutch Government is supporting the project. All governmental websites should be adapted to the standards of the project.

The project itself is organised by a non-commercial organisation specialised in accessibility and directly related to the organisations of handicapped and elderly people.

The ambassadors of the project are handicapped themselves.



figure: the ambassadors of 'Obstacles away'

2.2 Analysis

Since the beginning of the project, the project is known by 30% of the target group.

The project already won some prestigious prizes for the project. Many big companies see the advantage to sign the intention-declaration. So the ultimate goal is within reach.

One remark: because it appears to be a mentality issue, one expects, that equal rights need continuing attention.

2.3 Acknowledgements and links

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links

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