

“EU-wide study investigates utilisation of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) among older citizens”

In recent discussions of the **digital divide**, **older people** are increasingly highlighted as an excluded group and one that lags behind the rest of society as regards access to **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)** and the skills to use and benefit from them. Detailed analysis from the SeniorWatch European-wide **representative survey** reveals that from an ICT perspective, older people are not such a homogeneous group. For example, the majority of older Europeans can be regarded as being **in principle open-minded** towards new technology and many have already gained hands-on experience with a computer. At the same time, about one third of the European older population is still **at risk of further exclusion** from the Information Society and this does not only concern older age cohorts. However, results also show that older people are **expected to ‘catch-up’** considerably and thus narrow the digital divide.

The above illustrates just some of the outcomes from the SeniorWatch study, which is investigating the market dynamics of ICT products and services geared towards older citizens. For the first time, a **single comprehensive European source of information** on the current and potential usage of ICT among older people is available. By synthesising both **quantitative and qualitative information**, the study provides a significant resource of expert material and information, as follows:

- representative **survey data** on current use of and potential demand for ICT services and equipment amongst older citizens and organisations providing home care services to them
- analysis of **technology and industry trends** and new opportunities emanating from newly emerging ICT
- policy-focused analyses based on **country reports** for all EU Member States, the USA, Japan and Norway, detailing for each country current policy initiatives, industry/technology, market situation and trends, regulatory constraints, social system incentives and barriers etc. for the implementation of new/enhanced products, services and systems which can promote independent living and improve ICT access for all older people
- a series of best-practice **case studies** describing current leading edge ICT products and services which are a useful source of information about how the needs of older people can adequately be served and promoted
- strategic **policy recommendations** and conclusions.

The SeniorWatch study is currently being carried out by an **international consortium** of specialised European research organisations together with older people's organisations. It is funded by the Commission of the European Communities under its **Information Society Technology Programme**. Results will be available on a dedicated project web site (www.seniorwatch.de) as well as upon request.

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