

Objectives and contents



Objective → To get familiar with the “active ageing” concept and with the European and national strategies to promote it, specially those using ICT.

Contents → there are 3 main topics within this module:

- Topic 1: What is active ageing?
- Topic 2: European scene
- Topic 3: Growing old in the age of technology

TOPIC 1: What is active ageing?

- **Basic knowledge:** Active ageing concept and elements.
- **Objective Pursued:** Understanding what active ageing is and its link to global wellness.



Defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as *“the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age”* it’s been also used to describe the maintenance of positive subjective well-being, good physical, social and mental health and continued involvement in one’s family, peer group and community throughout the aging process.

According to the EC reports, ageing is one of the **greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st century** for European societies and will affect all EU countries and most policy areas.

By 2025 more than 20% of Europeans will be 65 or over, with a particularly rapid increase in numbers of over-80s. But this phenomenon also provides an economic and social opportunity: taking advantage of ICTs to give rise to new, more accessible services satisfying the needs of older people, facilitating their daily activities and improving their quality of life.



Here you have some strategic ideas that might help you to promote active ageing through ICT among your users:

- Older people should be **active every day in as many ways as possible**, at both physical and mental level.
- Many **physical and mental barriers can be reduced or even torn down thanks to ICT** devices, tools or resources.
- **Social networks are a very good ally against loneliness, isolation, apathy...** Encourage them to meet new people, to relate and interact with others, to find new friends...
- **Incorporate enjoyment:** The more fun they have, the more interest they will show. A healthy life is a joyous life!

Topic 2: European scene¹

- **Basic knowledge:** European (and local) strategies and reports regarding active ageing.
- **Objective Pursued:** Knowing the main European strategies and action lines with regards to this topic.

Active ageing means for the EC *helping people stay in charge of their own lives for as long as possible as they age and, where possible, to contribute to the economy and society.*

One of the greatest challenges currently facing Europe is how best to adapt EU policies and strategies to meet the demands associated with demographic change. As the EU faces this challenge its headline strategies such as the EU 2020 Strategy are heavily influenced by these prospects.

Challenges

- The proportion of **older people in our societies is increasing fast**, due to low birth rates, ageing "baby-boomers" and rising life expectancy.
- Between 2010 and 2060, the number of people over 65 will grow from 17.4% to 29.5% of the total population. The number of people over 80 will nearly triple to 12%.
- During the same time, **the working age population in the EU is expected to decline** by 14.2%. [Pensions](#), [health care](#) and [long-term care](#) systems risk becoming unsustainable, with a shrinking labour force no longer able to provide for the needs of the growing number of older people.

Policy response



- The EU devoted the [European Year 2012](#) to promoting active ageing as a basis for solidarity between generations. In this context, [guiding principles for active ageing](#) were elaborated by the [Social Protection Committee](#) and the [Employment Committee](#).
- The [Active Ageing Index](#) has been developed to assess the untapped potential of older people.
- The [European Innovation Partnership for Active and Health Ageing](#) is fostering innovation to raise healthy life expectancy.
- The Social Protection Committee is looking at ways of making adequate provision of long-term care sustainable in ageing societies, by investing in prevention, rehabilitation, age-friendly environments and more ways of delivering care that are better adjusted to people's needs and remaining capacities.
- The European Commission is launching a new **Action Plan** within the framework of the [i2010 initiative](#): the aim is both **to help older people towards a safer and more independent old age and to promote the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in services to persons.**

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1062&langId=en>

Topic 3: Growing in the age of ICT

- **Basic knowledge:** Double exclusion suffered by elderly people today and the integration of ICT in and ageing society.
- **Objective Pursued:** To increase awareness of the double exclusion suffered by elderly people today and to clearly identify how ICT can help to reduce it.

Age has turned to be the 2nd **cause of social exclusion** in the modern world. **This, together with**



the new emerging social exclusion cause – **the digital one – put senior citizens in a very disadvantaged place in our current society:** the so called “information and knowledge society”. But **ICT could eventually become,** not an exclusion but **a strategic and ally element** for elderly.

As the Council of the European Union set in their “*Ageing well in the information society*” report²:

- **The quality of life of ageing citizens can be substantially improved with ICT resources and tools to ageing well in the community,** at work and at home, for example through increased social networking, easier access to public and commercial services, enhanced work and daily living environments, and extended productive, independent and autonomous lives the isolation and loneliness experienced by many elderly citizens can be mitigated by the facilitation of social interaction provided by electronic communications;
- **The use of ICT-based products and services will allow ageing citizens to live longer independently,** and will provide opportunities for enhancing their safety, security and healthcare, thus reducing the dependence on institutional care and providing improved human dignity to the elderly;
- **ICT has significant potential to create a triple-win** by improving the quality of life of citizens, containing the rising costs of care, and enabling new and growing business opportunities for Europe’s companies including SMEs;
- Market barriers and fragmentation, insufficient market development and awareness, high diversity of rules and regulations, limited adoption of inclusive design, insufficient

² AGEING WELL IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY - Council conclusions

Council of the European Union 13891/07 (Presse 274), Provisional Version, Press Release, 2835th Council meeting, Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, Brussels, 29-30 November 2007, 03 December 2007

research and innovation, lack of affordable solutions, **digital illiteracy and insufficient understanding of users must be overcome for Europe to fully reap the benefits of ICT for ageing well.**

In short, the reality of a **changing and increasingly complex society** conditioned more and more by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has placed senior citizens in a very disadvantaged situation.

It is our challenge and our duty, as social agents participating in the ACTing project, to reduce this disadvantage and to help and support elderly people in their natural approaching to ICT by focusing on their real interests, needs and hobbies and by showing them how ICT can help them to better develop and enjoy those activities.