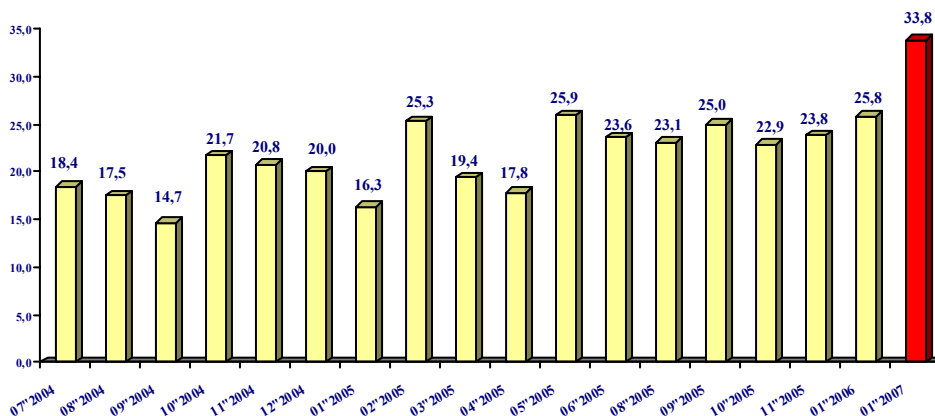




Country Profile

Information Society Indicators

Internet usage, %



Source: *Vitosha Research, Base 15+*

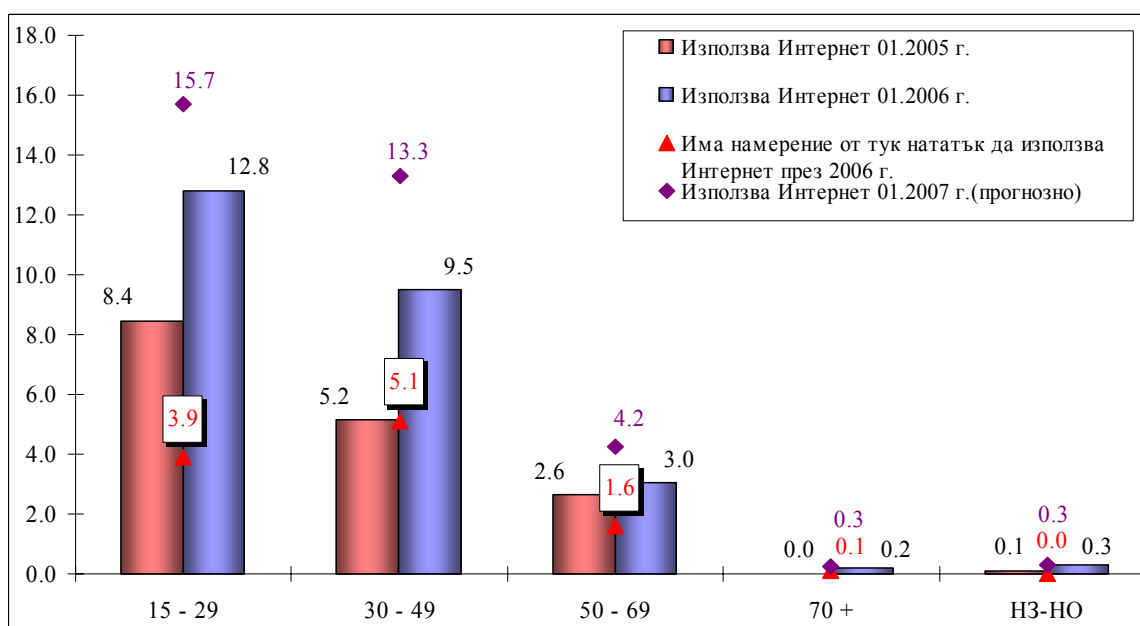
In the first half of 2006 31 % of population aged over 18 had an access to computer and over 25 % of population aged over 15 used Internet most commonly at home or at the work place (Vitosha Research, 2006).

Type of Access to Internet, (% from Internet users)

Type	November 2004	October 2005
Dial-up	2,0	1,8
Leased lines	0,3	0,6
Cable modem	4,8	4,3
Wireless	0,1	0,3
LAN	1,2	3,1
ADSL	0,3	0,5

According to data from the *Vitosha Research survey, December 2005*, the most popular Internet access is the cable one (around 4.3%), followed by the LAN access (3.1%). ADSL and wireless access is slightly above 1% of the population.

Internet usage according to the age (%)



Source: Vitosha Research, Base 15+

Percentage of individuals (15-74) having ordered/bought goods and services for private use over internet in the last 3 months

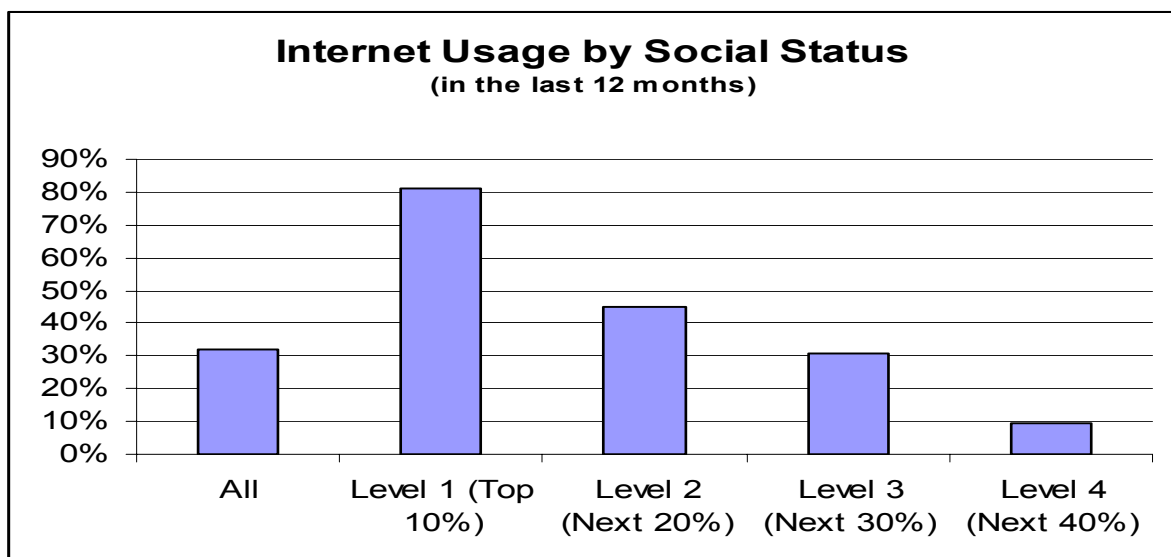
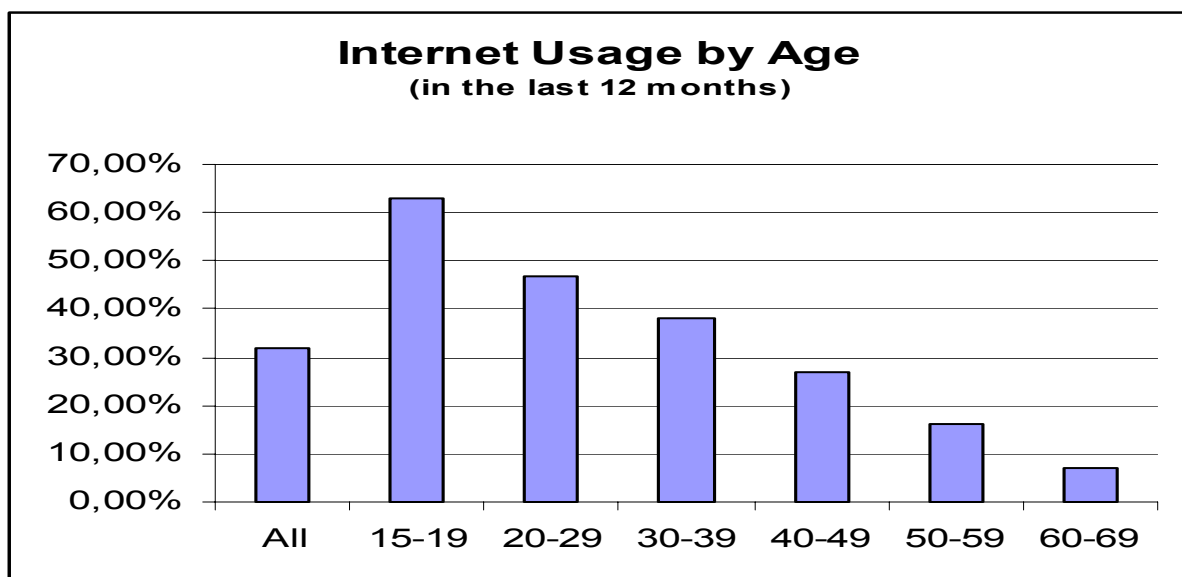
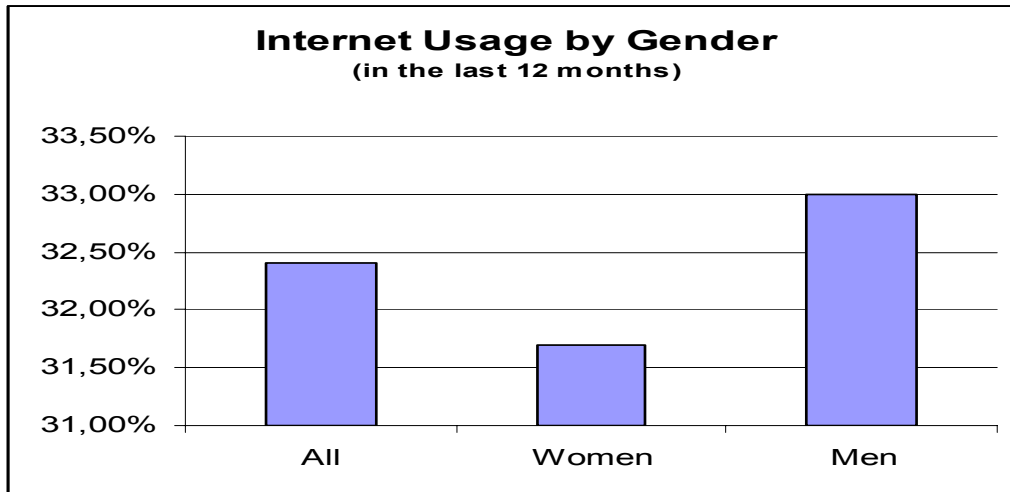
	(XI'2004)	(X'2005)
Yes	0,9	1,6
No	20,5	22,7
N.A.	1,4	1,7
Do not use Internet	77,2	74,0
Base	927	915

Source: Vitosha Research



ANOTHER VIEW ON THE INTERNET USERS

Urban Population 15-60 years old



Source: Market Test, TGI Bulgaria, Autumn 2006



e-Inclusion History

- Action Plan eEurope+ was the basic document which set the priorities for development of the Information society in Bulgaria. It recommends implementation of the basic directions of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of W3C Consortium (<http://www.w3.org/WAI>) in the public web pages. On its base the National Program for Information Society Development in Bulgaria was actualized in 2001. It includes activities for adoption of Design for all standards about accessibility of the ICT products and about improving opportunities for employment and social incorporating of the people with disabilities. It was reliable on public-private partnership and collaboration on behalf of the European standardizing organizations and European Commission. The principles of WAI have advisable character. In some countries they have been adopted as norms which guarantee the effect of their implementation. The former Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) together with branch associations and non-governmental organizations realized activities in Principles of accessibility popularizing and it foresaw survey in opportunities of their acceptance as norms in the national legislation.
- With the financial aid of the former Agency for Development of the Communications and ICT in the structure of MTC in 2003 MTC realized two initiatives related with internet access insurance of people with disabilities. An examination and analyze of the basic requirements for creating internet access place for people with disabilities was completed with the purpose of their integration in the information society. A business plan about the necessary equipment for one universal place for access and training of different categories people with disabilities was prepared according to the available communications of the living place type. Specialized portal was created in full response to W3C access requirements, level “A” and in a great degree to level “AA” which let access of people with sight, hearing and vocal impairments to web documents and information related mainly with their specific needs and necessities.
- In occasion of European Year of People with Disabilities the Council of Ministers (CM) prepared Bulgaria for All Program. In its framework was developed Bulgarian software for synthetic speech under WINDOWS in aim of blind people. Information access for blind people was ensured throughout established Bulgarian version for reading machines, opportunity computers with Braille and synthetic speech to work in Bulgarian was ensured as well.
- In the Sector Policy in communications an accent was put in the field of standard harmonization; universal service delivery field and customer interests protection.
- The Regulation about Order and Conditions for insuring universal communication service, according to the Telecommunications Law, foresees insuring access to fixed telephone services for people with disabilities, like:
 1. free of charge telephone directories, including alternative telephone directories;
 2. consumer communication devices with deaf consumers’ facilities;
 3. considering access to short message service (SMS) to the emergency-call number;
 4. facilities for blind consumers;
 5. free of charge including in the service “Limitation of the outgoing calls”;
 6. telephones for public use installation accessible for customers in wheelchairs;
 7. telephones for public use installation with text link or another kind link;
 8. detailed account insuring in accessible format;
 9. account payment at home.
- In Bulgaria only the satellite television is fully digitalized at present. The Sector Policy in Communications foresees full digitalization of the cable television till 2010, full covering of the country with digital land television till 2015, inculcating of the digital broadcast system DAB till 2015 and digital broadcast fewer than 30 MHz (DRM) till 2020.
- In relation with Media Section of the Council of Europe activities on behalf of Bulgaria was made a proposal in the draft Recommendation about Democratic and Social Influence of the digital broadcasting to be added a text which requires the electronic program guidance (EPG) and digital decoders to be consistent with the special needs of the people with disabilities and lack of foreign language knowledge as well with the aim to be maximal accessible for all the members of the society without sense of age, language knowledge and disability.
- For access of people with sight impairments to the digital television services is necessary to be established for example sound description, sound subtitles. That’s way changes in the national legislations are needed and creating of European standards about format and sound description delivery as well.

e-Inclusion Strategy

- State Agency for IT and Communications (SAITC) set the main objectives related to enhancement of knowledge based economy as well as Information Society priorities. The objectives which concern the policies on e-Inclusion includes;



- ⇒ creating a better environment for use and development of Information Technologies,
 - ⇒ improving computer literacy,
 - ⇒ creating skilled workforce,
 - ⇒ providing equal opportunities for Bulgarian citizens for access to Information resources and services and for acquiring skills for their use,
 - ⇒ Creating new quality of life, based on contemporary Information Technologies.
- Promoting e-Inclusion is also defined as one of the Information Society priorities in Bulgaria.
 - Other Information Society priorities in Bulgaria defined are as follows:
 - ⇒ Developing the ICT infrastructure and deploying e-services.
 - ⇒ Encouraging public-private partnerships for investment in ICT and innovation
 - ⇒ Building an effective information environment and interoperability standards
 - ⇒ Developing Research and Innovation infrastructure
 - ⇒ Promoting a full range of e-services for economic and social challenges.
 - Measures which are laid down in relation to e-Inclusion in Bulgaria are;
 - ⇒ Supporting a lifelong learning initiative for increase in qualification and computer literacy,
 - ⇒ Increasing the number of Public Internet Access Points, mostly in libraries.
 - ⇒ Supporting the establishment of rich content through the introduction of new Public Private Partnership models,
 - ⇒ Adopting the principles of Web Accessibility Initiative as norms in the national legislation.

Important policies in place

- National Strategy about Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities, 2003
- State Policy for Accelerated Information Society Development, 2006

e-Inclusion Legal Framework

Law in practice

Telecommunications Law
Draft Law on electronic communications

Research In Practice

e-Inclusion Actors

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: Responsible for the social protection and support of the vulnerable groups.
- Agency for Support: Responsible for administration of the social support programs throughout its territorial brunches.
- State Agency for IT and Communications (SAITC)
 - ⇒ defines the State policy for Information Society development at legislative, technological, economical and social levels and outlines the basic related activities,
 - ⇒ coordinates Information Society activities,
 - ⇒ synchronize and actively participate in ICT development in the public sector

e-Inclusion Who is Who

- Mrs. Emilia Maslarova : The Minister of Labour and Social Policy
- Mr. Vladimir Vatchkov, Chairman of State Agency for IT and Communications (SAITC)
- **e-Inclusion Sub Group contacts:**
 - ⇒ Mr. Vladimir Kalchev, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2, Triaditza Str., BG-1051 Sofia kalchev@mlsp.government.bg
 - ⇒ Mrs. Nelly Stoyanova, Director of Information Society and Information Technologies Directorate in the State Agency for IT and Communications. "Gen. Joseph Gurko" Blvd № 6,BG-Sofia 1000 nstoyanova@mtc.government.bg



e.Inclusion Progress by Riga Areas

ICT & Ageing

▪ Status in ICT & Ageing

- In Bulgaria, as well as in the other Member States of European Union, there is a lasting tendency of population ageing. The predominant part of the persons from higher-age groups in active age are with higher education, professional skills and experience, but a lot of them have no computer literacy, knowledge and abilities, needed for the more and more rapid spread of the new technologies. In conformity with the policy for active ageing more and more persons over age of 55 will remain on the labour market (LM). That tables serious challenges in front of state institutions, the business and the whole society for the integration of these people on the labour market.

• Actions to support ICT& Ageing

- The government of Bulgaria tries to meet these challenges by elaboration of measures and programs as a part of the active labour market policy, which prevents their social exclusion and their early stepping out of the labour market. A consecutive and purposeful policy for enhancement the training quality of these persons from higher-age groups is carried out. Courses for acquiring knowledge in the sphere of information technologies are organized. The accordance of the proposed training with the necessities of the employers is improved.
- In addition measures are undertaken for raising the readiness, capacity and possibilities of the occupied and unemployed, disadvantaged persons and groups to search and use the services of the information society. ICT enter also into elderly people's life in order to improve their everyday activities like shopping, banking, communication, access to health services.

Geographic digital divide

• Status of Common access to electronic content and services

Despite the positive tendency in recent years and the rapid increase of the level of investments in ICT, the overall level remains insufficient. The main reasons identified are the lagging behind in digitalization of the fixed electronic communications network, the interregional disparities in broadband penetration, the insufficient training in the use of ICT, the digital divide, the relatively low level of ICT uptake and use by SMEs, and the low purchasing power of Bulgarian households.

Service	Households with opportunity for access to the service	Households using the service
Cable	20% (~ 500 000 households)	4% (~ 100 000 households)
ADSL	10%(~ 250 000 households)	1% (~ 25 000 households)
Ethernet	40%	2%

- In 2005 the ADSL service of BTC AD, launched in 2004, gained great popularity. In just a year the number of subscribers to the service increased almost six times. Nevertheless, the demand and supply of broadband services is not widespread. According to estimates of the Communications Regulation Commission (CRC), at the end of 2005 the penetration of that kind of services in Bulgaria was around 1%.
- The excluding effect of modern ICT in terms of access, skills, location and financial affordability or so called digital divide is only added to old disparities, only to further divide social groups and economically deprived regions.
- Considerable educational and intra-regional disparities exist in, the use of PCs and Internet. Best rates of these indicators are observed in the South-West region² where almost half of the subscribers in the country are concentrated. The worst rates are registered in the North-West region³. As a rule, persons with basic and secondary education, with worker occupations, with household income up to BGN 300 per month, from villages and small towns and from Northern Bulgaria are the majority in the group of persons not using PCs and

² With 45% of the home PCs and 45% of the Internet users, NSI

³ With 3% of the home PCs and 3% of the Internet users, NSI



Internet. There are specific groups which are nearly excluded from the use of computers and Internet, such as ethnic minorities, pensioners, blind people and people living in rural areas.⁴ On the whole, these are **people excluded from information society** for a variety of reasons – low income, inadequate ICT infrastructure in the residential area they inhabit, poor education, language barriers, or because their occupations do not demand use of such communication means.

Still, 31% of respondents have declared they have Internet connection, mostly men, the youngest, aged 26-45, mostly with university degrees, senior officials or managers, intellectuals and entrepreneurs, those with monthly household income of over BGN 900 and those with BGN 601-900, capital city (60%) and bigger cities residents, from the South West and South East planning regions.

- A key challenge for policy makers remain digital divide among disadvantage groups and ethnic minorities. Data suggests though that the divide in ethnic groups goes up to three to five time's difference in internet penetration rate. Two major explanations exist for that: education economic well-being. Data also suggests that divide could be easily bridged at least for high-school students. There is practically no divide based on ethnicity when accessing internet via PIAPs/internet cafes. The largest point of divide witnessed by *e-Bulgaria 2005* report was access to PC and internet at schools. The large-scale government investment in ICTs in school would practically leverage this divide, leaving issues of trained teachers in specific regions in this country. Although at marginal levels PCs in households even in minorities are growing, reaching up to 5% to 7% in 2006.

Telecenters in the country

Centers operating at present (1 December 2006) – 103, out of which:

- 80 telecenters – established on the premises of Bulgarian Posts
- 14 associated telecenters – in student hostels and other institutions
- 1 mobile telecenter
- 1 telecenter, established in cooperation with the Korean government as represented by the Korea Agency For Digital Opportunity & Promotion (KADO)
- 7 telecenters in other places

• Actions to support Common access to electronic content and services

The modernisation of electronic communications infrastructure and the widespread access to high-speed Internet are important prerequisites for the wide penetration of electronic services.

Some activities to be supported:

- Choose the appropriate technology in accordance with the necessities of the place in which it is going to be installed;
- Provision a technology which is economically feasible for the users;
- Provision training in the use of the technology;
- Creation a stable regulatory system which favour the expansion of ICT;
- Establishment and development of a network of community telecenters for social and economic needs, providing affordable services to local communities including disabled people, the elderly, and the minorities;
- Provision of online service for public sector institutions (social, cultural, healthcare and cultural institutions);
- Home PC Program - aims at stimulating the purchase of home PCs, Internet access, improving the IT education and awarding European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL);
- Establishment of rich content through the introduction of new Public Private Partnership models;
- Development of critical, secure, dependable and trusted public-owned infrastructure, built on broadband connections to urban surroundings and poorly urbanized territories;
- Introduction of measures and systems to provide data and communication security meeting the European standards and business requirements.

⁴ According to Vitosha Research, 2006 5 % of Roma people, 7 % of Turkish, and 1-2% of pensioners use Internet.



e-Accessibility

• Status of e-Accessibility (e-A)

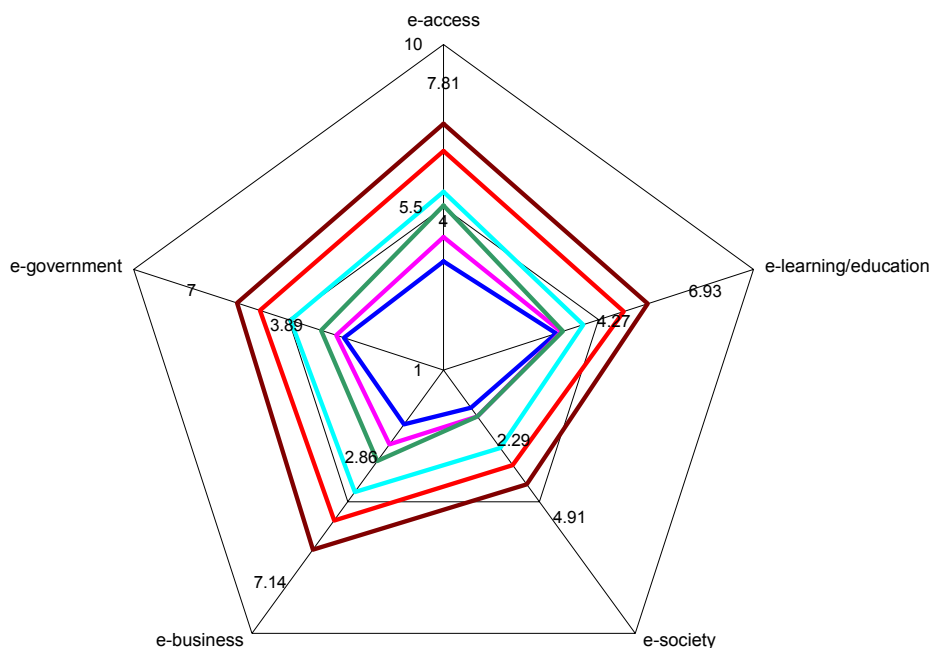
The incorporation of the information society's services in all branches of the economy leads to its modernization, multiplication of effectiveness, productivity and generates additional economic growth. The accelerated development of IS is a key factor in overcoming the digital separation between Bulgaria and the other Member State of the EU.

- Regarding the physical e-accessibility and the equal opportunities for e-access in Bulgaria, there are difficulties in the following target groups:
- old people;
- disadvantaged persons;
- persons with low income;
- minority groups;
- people in the outlying areas;
- migrants.

The ethnic groups and the migrants which are part of the cultural variety in the country have low or no preparation for e-access. In most of the cases there is low computer literacy which makes difficult their access to ICT and hinders communication with these target groups.

Among the key factors of growth in 2006 remain the improved access to computers and e-access tools as a whole, as well as the diversification of the electronic content and services. The growth of the *e-Bulgaria* indicators show constant trend towards homogenizing of the five areas:

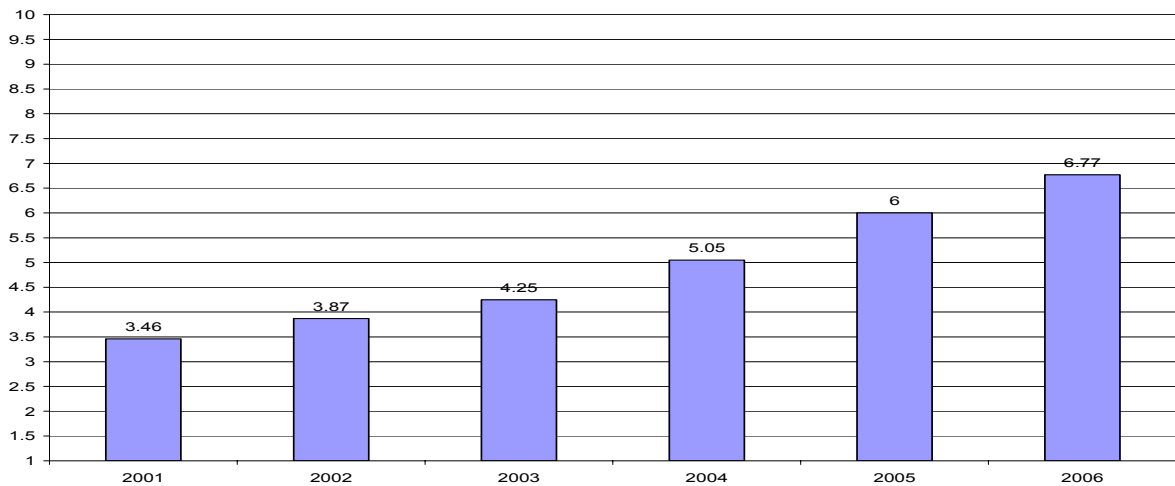
e-Bulgaria Index 2001 – 2006



The actual penetration of the technologies in the society however greatly lags behind the increase of connectivity and economic accessibility. This is due to the non-economic barriers in front of the use of computers and Internet such as education, age, social status, etc. of large groups of people.



e-Bulgaria Index Trend



Source: Applied Research and Communications Fund, 2006.

Bulgarian households would enter EU pretty well connected with telecommunication infrastructure. 65 % of households have cable TV in first half of 2006. 31 % of households with children have computers at home with projected increase up to 42 % by the end of the year. Around a third of population would have access to internet by end of 2006. Currently typical internet bandwidth at home (two thirds of cases) is 256 kbs and higher, yet high-speed/volume traffic is usually bound nationally and expected to decrease in effect of serious campaigns of law-enforcement agencies against free servers and P2P networks. However it is not expected that internet penetration at homes would decrease, rather new businesses are expected to emerge.

Raising the quality and the scope of the proposed services to persons who search work actively and to the employers.

IT have an significant role for raising the quality and the scope of the proposed services to persons who search work actively and to the employers. Employment agency (EA) puts into practice in all labour offices a "processing model" and individual approach for work with unemployed persons, which is precondition for reduction the period of unemployment for persons at a mature age.

Granting of innovative instruments - business incubators, IT-Centers and schemes for microfinancing

An important accent in the project strategy is the granting of innovative instruments to the target groups, with the help of which they will be supported to start and/or to assist development their own business. Such instruments are business incubators, ITC and schemes for microfinancing in the form of finance leasing.

The main purpose of ITC is raising the competitive power of the local enterprises and agricultural producers by access to a variety of informational and business consulting services, in areas with low level of economic development. The centres support the development of a viable business through better informing and consultations for the current and forthcoming policy, the legal frame and the mechanisms for support to the undertakers.

The unequal access to ICT is outlined as a main problem for equal participation in the information society of the elderly people and persons with special needs. This access becomes a necessary condition for their e-intergration (services, oriented to vulnerable groups). **We consider that the solution of the problems, connected with the E-A, requires co-ordinated efforts of the concerned state institutions, active participation of business, citizens and non-governmental organizations for assistance to all groups of consumers.**

• Actions towards e-Accessibility

In order to overcome the obstacles to the physical e-accessibility and the equal opportunities for e-access, we propose the following:

- building of special terminals for access of disadvantaged persons and persons with low income;
- formation of specialists groups for work with the target groups;
- construction of special websites with information for the target groups;
- possibility for e-access from every place of the country to any kind of public and bank services;
- opportunity to e-pay for the rendered services;
- chance for e-access in urgent cases;
- construction of high-organized and high-speeded e-net with public terminals for access in the whole country;



- result-orientated building of e-nets in the outlying areas, the countryside and economically poor regions.

Main measures:

- Adopting the principles of Web Accessibility Initiative as norms in the national legislation;
- Introduction of distance working incentives.

Raising the quality and the scope of the proposed services to persons who search work actively and to the employers.

From the end of 2006 approximately one third part of the employment bureaus in the country will work on “one counter” principle. Furthermore EA offers on its modern and interactive website a number of services like:

- on-line labour exchange with vacant labour places, notified in the employment bureaus;
- e-services, which include on-line submission of petitions, complaints, proposals and alerts from citizens and legal entities, as well as an access to public information;
- information about self-dependent vocational guidance for more than 400 professions;
- e-adviser for job search.

Creation of specialized ic sectons

About 52 employment bureaus have specialized IC sections, named Centers “Labour”. ICT are a base for the services, offered by these centers. With a view to individual and group consultations they propose videofilms for professions, multimedia products with rich text and video material about the particular professions and computer programs for vocational guidance.

Creation of data base for E- ACCESSIBILITY

In 2006 a Project on program ”PHARE” is realized by which a new, modern EA data base is set up, according to the contemporary requirements about scope and quantity of the information. This modern information system shall be the basis for planning and accounting the national employment policy, for monitoring the operations, realized with resources from the structural funds, etc.

An important accent in the project strategy is the **granting of innovative instruments to the target groups, with the help of which they will be supported to start and/or to assist development their own business. Such instruments are business incubators, ITC and schemes for microfinancing in the form of finance leasing.** In order to stimulate the economy growth and the formation of long-term employment through complex support for local business, business centers according to project “Employment by business support” are established in 40 municipalities with low living standard in the country.

Upon the project in all business centers (BC) are established ITC and the BC provide to the local community a number of services in the field of the contemporary communication and internet. **These IT centers provide access to internet for native undertakers and assist for development of business in different directions** – creating direct business contacts, market information about the country and abroad, advertisement on the international market, the development of e-commerce and well-equipped halls for local training. The facilitated access to internet is substantial instrument for realization of the project strategy on local level, in view of the fact that this contributes to the community fast access to world innovations, markets and technologies.

Plan for the equal opportunities for disabled persons (DP) for 2006-2007

For implementation of Operative aim II. “Creation of an accessible environment for DP” of the Plan for the equal opportunities for disabled persons (DP) for 2006-2007 the following activities for ensuring of E-A are provided:

- Activity 8 (A 8)– Implementation of the principles for accessibility in the public Internet pages as rules in the national legislation with a deadline the end of December 2007. The president of State Agency for Information Technology and Communications (SAITC), as a leading institution, is responsible for the implementation. This A 8 aims to reach as a result guaranteed implementation of the principles for accessibility;
- A 9 – Establishment and support of an informational portal for DP. The president of SAITC, as a leading institution, is responsible for the implementation. The A 9 should reach as a result the ensuring of accessible informational and communication environment for people with ocular, auditory and mental disorder;
- A 10 – Preparation of a project for establishment of a pilot center for training and technical aid of young DP to work with electronic informational and communication products and services till the end of December, 2007. The president of SAITC, as a leading institution, is responsible for the implementation. The Agency for DP is an engaged institution. The A 10 is aimed to reach as a result vocational qualification, opportunities for distant employment and social integration of DP.

The indicated activites are in conformity with the **Disability Action Plan of the EU (2004-2010)**, operative objective 3 – “Improving of the accessibility for all”, as well as with a priority “Helping the access of goods and



services”, provided for the second phase (2006-2007) of the Plan.

National program for child protection (CP) for 2006

In the field of Constructing and supporting of a national information system (IS) in the sphere of child protection (CP) upon the National program for CP for 2006, the following aim is incorporated – Building of a computer IS for CP. This IS consists of two activities, connected with:

- Providing of an individual high-speed internet channel in State agency for child protection (SACP) only for the needs of IS. Minister of the state administration and the administrative reform and the president of SACP are the responsible authorities.
- Insurance of the necessary computer configurations, smart cards and reading devices in SCP and RDSA. The executive president of ASA is the responsible authority.

Digital Literacy and Competences

• Status on Digital Literacy and Competences

Differentiation *by skills* in the new technologies and use of Internet is an issue, where education plays a major role. The Ministry of Education and Science is implementing a Strategy for Introduction of ICT in High Schools which envisages substantial investment in high-speed Internet connectivity, development of digital educational content and teacher training.

- All universities are connected to Internet and 80% of the students are on-line
- The National High-speed Research Net work is connected to the European Research and Educational Network (GEANT)
- The majority of the universities provide wireless Internet access to their professors and students
- All schools are computerised and above 80% of their students use Internet
- PC density in elementary and high schools will be 12 pupils per PC within the end of 2007.

Improving the employment adaptability of disadvantaged persons.

- Using the ICT, the active labour market policy generates conditions for **improving the employment adaptability of disadvantaged persons**. The effective use of all opportunities for ICT by elaboration, implementation, monitoring and control of the programs and measures for employment and vocational training is a base for achievement of durable results.

• Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences

Main measures:

- Employ and utilize modern information and education technologies for e-Inclusion and integration of minorities, the disabled, and the elderly;
- ICT training at an earliest age;
- Raise the computer literacy of all teachers and professors;
- Raise the level of IT expertise of computer class teachers;
- Improve the quality of informatics and information technology education;
- A lifelong learning initiative for increase in qualification and computer literacy.

• Improving the employment adaptability of disadvantaged persons

- MLSP undertakes particular actions - for the last several years a number of operations were launched, which resulted in raising the training quality, improving the correspondence of the offered training with the real necessities of the employers, and especially an extension of the training in the IT sphere.

• Bulgarian-german CENTERS FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING (CVT)

- MLSP heads 3 Bulgarian-German CVT. The center in Pazardzhik is specialized in modern technologies, business administration and foreign language training. Upon the program “CT of young men” the access of young persons to ICT is improving through gaining knowledge in these sphere. The training of unemployed youth is accomplishing upon educational program (EP), based on the contemporary achievements in the field of ICT. In 2006 a training for 1000 youths and employment for 161 persons is planned.

• Raising of the vocational training (VT), human capital’s development (HCD) and life long learning (LLL)

- The actions for raising of the VT, HCD and the LLL are among the main priorities of the employment policy. Accordingly, measures for VT’s improvement of the disadvantaged groups on the labour market are launched, particularly intended to VT of young people, computer training, entrepreneurship’s training, etc. The actions for raising the knowledge of unemployed persons in the field of ICT hold a significant part in National Action Plan for Employment.



- **Project “training for reconciliation between work and family life of women” (project “trwflw”)**
- In 2006 MLSP in co-operation with Bulgarian Industrial Association will realize the project “TRWFLW”. According to the newest ICT achievements, a complete training for 70 women is planned.
- **Program “TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS” (program “TET”)**
- In 2006 the program “TET” is launched. The activities for training of teachers how to use ICT in the educational process take a significant place in it. In this module of the project 150 teachers are included.

e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

- **Status on e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity**

The creation of digital multimedia cultural content, digital libraries and museums can substantially raise the interest to Bulgarian culture heritage, but is still in an initial phase. Only 30 % of Bulgarian libraries use computers, 1,6 % have digitalised their content, 16 % have copy machines, and only 8,5 % have electronic catalogues⁵.

- **Actions towards e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity**

- Increasing the number of Public Internet Access Points, mostly in libraries, as well as in regions with ethnic minorities and high unemployment rate;
- Development of linguistic translators and other applications in the translation area;
- Implementation of Cyrillic domain names;
- Promotion of locally relevant content generation;
- Collaborating in the development of content which simplifies people’s lives and improves their quality of life;
 - Creation of valuable e-content in the local language in all social spheres;
 - Preservation the local social-cultural identity and strengthen the integration of exclusion risk group;
 - Potentiating the use of tools which permit to create links to the community from all perspectives (friends, family, social circle, institutions, businesses...).

Inclusive eGovernment

- **Status on inclusive eGovernment**

- The developments in the *e-government* and *e-policy* in Bulgaria in 2005 and 2006 are mostly related to the process of equipping the central administration, including its regional units, with ICT, availability of websites and the offered through them information and electronic services, as well as the IT trainings of the government servants. The positive results in providing electronic services however are mostly due to some separate efforts of different administrations and have no synergic effect.
- The Electronic Governance Act passed the Council of Ministers in October 2006 and has been submitted to the Parliament for adoption. The National e-Government Interoperability Framework has been adopted by the Council of Ministers in June 2006.
- Many governmental agencies, municipalities and regional administrations have introduced e-Services based on the “One-Stop-Shop” principle. More than 300 public centers for e-Service delivery have been established in small cities and villages.
- The Decree № 153 / 05.07.2004 of the Council of Ministers obliged all governmental bodies to receive and issue electronic documents signed by qualified electronic signature. The average readiness for e-Documents works in the governmental administration is estimated as 77,5 % (Nov 2005).
- The main attention has been paid to the 20 indicative e-Services (12 – for citizens and 8 – for companies) defined by the European Commission. The rate of fulfilment of the full cycle of these services (bilateral automated transactions) at the end of 2005 is as follows: indicative e-Services for citizens – 47,06 %; indicative e-Services for companies – 80,56 %; average rate - 58.65 %.
- Besides the indicative e-Services many governmental agencies have brought into use more than 40 additional services. In particular, many e-Services have been introduced by Social Security and Tax Administrations.

Actions towards inclusive eGovernment

- Development and introduction of systems of indicators and mechanisms for measuring the users’ satisfaction

⁵ E-readiness of Bulgarian libraries for conversion into knowledge centers in the information society, Union of ILibrary and Information Workers and State Agency for Information Technologies and Communications, 2006



with the quality of the service delivery;

- Review, needs analysis and improvement of the services proposed to the citizens;
- Development of mechanisms for assessment of the possibilities and needs for introduction of innovative practices and new services;
- Preparation of guidelines and methodologies on the development of service delivery standards and client's charters;
- Development of models for active involvement of the civil society in the process of enhancing the administrative service delivery - development of dialogue;
- Development of administrative e-services for the citizens charter;
- Upgrading the state administration information systems with business intelligence and knowledge management facilities and procedures;
- Implementation of public Data Bases in compliance with EU directives for the management of a registry system, a cadastre system, a property registry, territories, population and resources;
- Promotion of e-services among the people in a technologically disadvantaged position by guaranteeing facilitated or free access;
- Training of staff in work with people in a disadvantaged position;
- Establishing call-centres for information provision by the administration, as well as self-service points;
- Development of modules to the e-government systems for multilingual functionality

Challenges

- Development of ICT infrastructure for wide public access to electronic services;
- Making ICT products and services more accessible and more cost-effective;
- Improving digital literacy and competences in all age groups;
- Multimedia content and tools for compulsory education and life-long learning;
- Development of public websites with various measures of disability access and foreign language translation feature;
- Increasing quality of life.

