

# CYPRUS 2008



## Country Profile

### Information Society Indicators

Percentage of households with Internet access: 39 % (2007)

Percentage of enterprises with Internet access: 88 % (2007)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet at least once a week: 35 % (2007)

Percentage of households with a broadband connection: 20 % (2007)

Percentage of enterprises with a broadband connection: 69 % (2007)

Percentage of individuals having purchased/ordered online in the last three months: 8 % (2007)

Percentage of enterprises having received orders online within the previous year: 7 % (2007)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities: obtaining information 18.4 %, downloading forms 13 %, returning filled forms 9.6 % (2007)

Percentage of enterprises using the Internet for interaction with public authorities: obtaining information 53 %, downloading forms 43 %, returning filled forms 14 % (2007)

Number of computers per one hundred students: 8,1 in 2006 for primary schools.

Number of computers per one hundred students in secondary schools: 17,3 in 2006.

### e-Inclusion History

In recent years, Cyprus has made considerable progress in some areas such as computer use and access to the internet by households and businesses, ownership of mobile phones, provision of public services through the internet and improvement of the relevant school infrastructure.

Indicatively, it is stated that internet usage by businesses reaches 88% in 2007 while the number of households with access to the internet is around 39% in 2007. (*source: Eurostat*)

Despite the above, the use of ICTs still remains at low levels and presents an obstacle for the wider use of electronic services. Indicatively, the connection of households to broadband networks reached 20% in 2007, which is considerably lower than the EU(27) average. (*source: Eurostat*)

The indicator for e-commerce is very low compared to most EU Member States (in 2006, e-commerce accounted for only 1,6% of the total business turnover, compared to the EU25 average of 11,7%). (*i2010 Annual Country Report 2007*)

However, with regards to the National Portal, the EU 7th Measurement report “The User Challenge Benchmarking, The Supply of Online Public Services” which was published in September 2007, shows that the Cyprus Government Portal receives a very high score of 98% on an average of 75% for the EU27+.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus forms a Strategy that is in full alignment with EU i2010, with the related Signposts towards eGovernment as well as with the most recent Ministerial Declaration and guidelines. A series of measures and actions have been, or are planned to be, promoted in order to achieve the i2010 Strategy and Action Plan.

In the meantime, the Council of Ministers approved on 6/2/2008 the appointment of an Information Society Commissioner who will be responsible for the formation and implementation of a national strategy for Information Society. Currently, related legislation is under preparation and the relevant bill is to be approved by the House of Representatives. In addition, the Council of Ministers on 5/9/2007 assigned the Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance to be responsible for the preparation of the National Strategy for the e-Inclusion in coordination with Department of Information Technology Services (DITS), until the Appointment of the Commissioner.



## **e-Inclusion Strategy**

- Based on the Council of Ministers decision of 5/9/2007 an eInclusion National Strategy is to be prepared by the Social Welfare Services (SWS) in coordination with DITS.

## **e-Inclusion Legal Framework**

### **Law in practice**

- Telecommunications Law (I) 2006
- The regulation of Electronic Communications and Postal Services law of 2004
- Law of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and the supply of goods and services 18(I)/2008
- The Race and other Discrimination Law 42(I)/2004
- The Processing of Personal Data (Protection of Individuals) Law of 138(I)/2001
- Law on certain Legal Aspects of Information Society Services, in particular electronic Commerce and Associated matters of 156(I)/2004
- Legal Framework for electronic signatures and Associated matters law of 188(I)/2004

### **Research in practice**

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## **e-Inclusion Actors**

- Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance: Responsible for the establishment of the Strategy on e-Inclusion.
- The Department of Information Technology Services (Ministry of Finance) is responsible for ensuring that the full potential of information technology is harnessed to support the Government policies and objectives. In cooperation with SWS, will establish the strategy on e-Inclusion.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is responsible for the employment and training policies of human resources, including groups of people with special needs. The Planning Bureau has the overall responsibility for the co-ordination of institutions/services involved in Information Society issues.
- The Ministry of Commerce Industry and Tourism has the responsibility for the growth of electronic commerce (e-commerce) and for strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the promotion of electronic learning in all levels of education and the preparation of tomorrow's citizens in Information Society.
- The Ministry of Health is in charge for the provision of high quality health services, including electronic health services, to the public.
- The Ministry of Communications and Works is responsible for the telecommunications sector.
- The Commissioner of the Telecommunications and Postal Services has the general responsibility for the protection of competition in the telecommunications sector.
- Human Resource Development Authority plays an important role in implementing the policy for human resources training and growth.

## **e-Inclusion Who is Who**

- e-Inclusion subgroup contact:
  1. Ms Stefi Chrysostomou, Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, ([schrysostomou@sws.mlsi.gov.cy](mailto:schrysostomou@sws.mlsi.gov.cy))
  2. Mrs Andriana Achilleos, Department of Information Technology Services, Ministry of Finance, ([aachilleos@dits.mof.gov.cy](mailto:aachilleos@dits.mof.gov.cy))



## **e.Inclusion Progress by Riga Areas**

### **ICT & Ageing**

#### **• Status in ICT & Ageing**

In Cyprus, the majority of persons above 65 have no computer literacy, did not have the chance to work with computers and did not practice the benefits of technology and ICT as much as the new generation. However, a very high percentage of this age group is used to mobile telephony and they are happy to use it more.

The Government recognises the need as well as the benefits from the use of ICT for the welfare and the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly people. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is promoting new measures, policies and actions regarding ICT and ageing.

Cyprus is participating in the Ambient Assisted Living project, as an EU member state. Ambient Assisted Living – the demographic change and ageing in Europe implies not only challenges but also opportunities for citizens. This program enhances the quality of life of older people through the use of ICT (cameras and sensors are used to record elderly person's daily routine and to spot any extraordinary events). Elderly people can live in their preferred environment while maintaining a healthy lifestyle and being prevented from isolation. The program, which is a pan-european initiative, is at its early stages in Cyprus.

#### **• Actions to support ICT& Ageing**

1. ICT classes for Senior citizens – the Ministry of Education and Culture offers free of charge ICT afternoon classes to senior citizens trying to help them maintain their life quality in the constantly changing social environment.
2. Financial support from SWS for Public Assistance recipients (elderly people and people with disabilities living alone) for Telecare Services.
3. For the new programming period 2007- 2013, SWS are promoting a pilot project for the use of ICT's for the care needs of elderly people and people with disabilities.
4. Measures and other programs from other Departments and Services are ready to start running related to training of elderly people on ICT and internet, access to health services, communication, etc in order to improve their everyday life, activities and stay active in the society as longer as they can.

### **Geographic digital divide**

#### **• Status of Common access to electronic content and services**

Geographic digital divide continues to be a problem in Cyprus due to income, education, communication (especially in broadband penetration) and transportation reasons.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus, in order to minimize the geographical digital divide is promoting different projects. To this end, 2 new Citizen Services Centers (CSC) are established in two remote areas in Cyprus. One, on the mountains area (Pelendri village) where transportation to the towns and communications are very low and slow and another one at the remotest village on the west end of Cyprus (Polys Chrysochous village).

The people from the villages and the surrounding areas can visit the CSC 's and issue all government documents they need, like licensing papers, pay social insurances fees, etc. In addition, the CSC offer internet access and people can use internet with the help of government staff, in case they need it.

In the meantime, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus main objective is to penetrate broadband in all government controlled areas in Cyprus, introduce innovative services to remote and other areas and improve and increase the penetration of ICT in all government controlled areas in Cyprus.

In addition, financial support is offered from SWS for Public Assistance recipients (elderly people and people with disabilities living alone) for Telecare Services which covers all government controlled areas in Cyprus.



## Actions to support Common access to electronic content and services

1. Mobile CSC. A Mobile Citizen Services Center will be travelling around Cyprus, especially at remote areas/villages and will provide to citizens all services that can be found in a local CSC.
2. Internet Mobile Unit, Virtual Bus - a bus fully equipped with state of the art ICT facilities (Broadband, Satellite, WiFi, GPRS, Voice overIP, conference set ups, etc) tours remote areas where broadband communications are not available and offers internet services, mobile training/conference/research centre services to the public or other organised groups.
3. Increase and improve the online services for public services and local authorities.
4. Websites of all government Departments and Ministries as well as all embassies abroad.

## e-Accessibility

### • Status of e-Accessibility

1. Main objective of the Government in the field of e-Accessibility is to have all public service websites available and compliant with priority A of W3C guidelines (WCAG 1.0).

Regarding the physical e-accessibility and the equal opportunities for e-access in Cyprus, there are difficulties regarding the following target groups: elderly people, people with disabilities, low income people, people in remote areas and migrants.

### • Actions towards e-Accessibility

1. One of the medium-term targets of the Government is to enhance all public service websites to be compliant with WCAG 1.0 priority AA.
2. For the migrants and the Asylum applicants arriving in Cyprus, the Asylum Service established an internet Center where the applicants have access to internet and can get information through the internet about their country, laws and regulation of Cyprus, etc.

## Digital Literacy and Competences

### • Status on Digital Literacy and Competences

Main objective of the Government of Cyprus is to improve and increase digital literacy in Cyprus. To that end ICT classes are offered to different groups of people such as:

- i. Prisoners – aiming to improve ICT professional knowledge of prisoners so that they can seek employment opportunities when discharged and trying to enter the labour force.
- ii. Young people – the Cyprus Youth Board organises free of charge ICT classes at youth centres/organisations aiming to introduce young people to new technological means and methods.
- iii. Senior citizens – the Ministry of Education and Culture offers free of charge ICT afternoon classes to senior citizens trying to help them maintain their life quality in the constantly changing social environment.
- iv. Unemployed persons – The Human Resource Development Authority implements projects on Digital Literacy.
- v. Public Assistance Recipients – Social Welfare Services organise ICT classes for Public Assistance Recipients in order to become competitive in the labour market and have equal employment opportunities while at the same time combating digital literacy, under a project that is co-funded by the European Social Fund.
- vi. Government employees – the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration is offering training of public employees, from Greece and Cyprus on issues concerning the European Union via e-Learning.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is implementing a project (DIAS project) for the introduction of ICT in all Schools. Under the DIAS project a portal has been developed which will cover all services for students, teachers and parents. More specifically, through the portal the following services can be provided:

- Creation of personal emails and websites for students and teachers,
- Digital education content for different subjects,
- Accessibility to parents for the educational progress of the students,
- E-Learning Courses



- ADSL connectivity in all schools, etc.

Currently, DIAS Project is on a pilot implementation phase on 8 schools (elementary and high schools).

### • **Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences**

- After the completion of the pilot implementation phase of the DIAS Project, broadband connection and intranet services will be provided in all schools.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture is currently evaluating a tender on School Management System.
- On going ICT classes for:
  - i. Detainees
  - ii. Young.
  - iii. Senior citizens.
  - iv. Unemployed persons
  - v. Public Assistance Recipients
- Internet Mobile Unit, Virtual Bus - a bus fully equipped with state of the art ICT facilities (Broadband, Satellite, WiFi, GPRS, Voice overIP, conference set ups, etc) tours remote areas where broadband communications are not available and offers internet services, mobile training/conference/research centre services to the public or other organised groups.
- Improve and raise computer awareness and digital literacy of all teachers and professors.

## **e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity**

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

Cultural diversity will be addressed under the E-Inclusion Strategy.

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

Cultural diversity will be addressed under the E-Inclusion Strategy.

## **Inclusive eGovernment**

### • **Status on inclusive eGovernment**

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus forms a Strategy that is in full alignment with EU i2010, with the related Signposts towards eGovernment as well as with the most recent Ministerial Declaration and guidelines from the last eGovernment Ministerial Conference in Lisbon in September 2007. It seeks to reinforce ICTs contribution to the country's economy and the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

However, with regards to the National Portal, the EU 7th Measurement report "The User Challenge Benchmarking, The Supply of Online Public Services" which was published in September 2007, shows that the Cyprus Government Portal receives a very high score of 98% on an average of 75% for the EU27+.

A series of measures and actions have been, or are planned to be, promoted in order to achieve the i2010 Strategy and Action Plan. Relevant measures and actions are outlined below categorised under the i2010 eGovernment Signposts: *No citizen left behind – Inclusive eGovernment*

- All Government Ministries/Departments/Services, including government embassies, maintain their own websites which are either informative and provide downloading of forms and other documents or also support user interaction. In order to promote e-inclusion, public web pages are developed on the basis of the Web Accessibility Guidelines and are continuously enhanced to reflect changing demands by the Cyprus Government and EU.
- The Council of Ministers approved on 16/7/2008 the establishment of a Mobile Citizen Service Centre (pilot project) after the successful operation of five (two more to operate soon) Citizen Service Centres (CSC) all over Cyprus. The Mobile CSC will provide services to remote areas where CSC are not easily accessible.



- Various Inclusive eGovernment flagship initiatives have been promoted such as:
  - Vocational training and promotion of public assistance recipients in the labour market – aiming to improve ICT professional qualifications of public assistance recipients in order to become competitive in the labour market and have equal employment opportunities while at the same time combating digital literacy.
  - Expansion and improvement of care services for the children, the elderly, the disabled and other dependants – care facilities provide ICT classes to dependants (children and elderly people, people with disabilities).
  - Ambient Assisted Living – the demographic change and ageing in Europe implies not only challenges but also opportunities for citizens. This program enhances the quality of life of older people through the use of ICT (cameras and sensors are used to record elderly person’s daily routine and to spot any extraordinary events). Elderly people can live in their preferred environment while maintaining a healthy lifestyle and being prevented from isolation. The program, which is a pan-european initiative, is at its early stages in Cyprus.

All electronic services provided by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus are available without any discrimination. All government websites are compliant with priority A of W3C guidelines.

Other on-line services offered by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus are the following:

1. Income taxes: declaration, notification of assessment
2. Job search services by labour offices
3. Social security benefits
4. Personal documents: passport and driver’s licence
5. Car registration (new, used, imported cars)
6. Application for building permission
7. Declaration to the police (e.g. in case of theft)
8. Public libraries (availability of catalogues, search tools)
9. Certificates (birth and marriage): request and delivery
10. Enrolment in higher education/university
11. Announcement of moving (change of address)
12. Health related services (interactive advice on the availability of services in different hospitals; appointments for hospitals)

The 8 services for businesses are as follows:

1. Social contributions for employees
2. Corporate tax: declaration, notification
3. VAT: declaration, notification
4. Registration of a new company
5. Submission of data to statistical offices
6. Customs declarations
7. Environment-related permits (incl. reporting)
8. Public procurement

• **Actions towards inclusive eGovernment**

- Mobile Citizen Service Center
- Completion of e-procurement project



## **Challenges**

Different challenges related to eInclusion will be soon derived from the eInclusion Strategy that is going to be prepared.

Focus on activities in the fields of accessibility, multi-channel access and electronic documents for a better quality of life of people with special needs.



