ESTONIA 2008

Country Profile

Information Society Indicators

- Percentage of households having internet access to the Internet at home – 58,1
- Percentage of households with a broadband connection – 30,6 (having some sort of DSL connection)
- Percentage of individuals (55-74 years old) using the Internet – 26,8 (not known how often)
- Percentage if individuals (55-74 years old) having ordered/bought goods and services for private use over the Internet in the last 3 months - N/A (10.1% of all 16-74 years old have orderd or purchased goods over the Internet)
- Percentage of individuals (55-74 years old) using the internet for interacting with public authorities Obtaining information N/A (49.8% of all Internet users), downloading official forms – N/A (36,6% of all internet users), returning filled forms – N/A (36,8% of all Internet users)

Source: Statistics Estonia

e-Inclusion History

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e-Inclusion Strategy

Important policies in place

- There is no distinct strategy for promotion of eInclusion. The latter is seen as a horizontal policy through different sector strategies, mainly the ones concerning information society.
- On November 30, 2006 the Government of Estonia approved the "Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013" - a sectoral development plan, setting out the general framework, objectives and respective action fields for the broad employment of ICT in the development of knowledge-based economy and society in Estonia in 2007-2013.
- Also National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010 states the main challenges in preventing and narrowing the digital divide: developing an individual-centred and inclusive society. “A precondition to participating in the knowledge society is access to the Internet and services using ICT opportunities in general. The goal is to have each member of society aware of the possibilities of information society, that they would have the skills and opportunities to use and create digital information and actively participate in public life both on the national and regional level” (National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010 – will be available shortly on http://www.sm.ee/kaasatus/).
- Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005–2008 defines as an objective the creation of opportunities for adults' lifelong learning, including people with special needs, according to individual capabilities and needs. One of the actions of the Strategy is provision of free elementary computer and Internet training in cooperation private and public sector (Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005–2008 - http://www.hm.ee/index.php?03236).

- **Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013 - National Strategy**

The strategy was completed in 2006 and is targeted at all residents of Estonia.
The ministry responsible for the co-ordination of information society development in Estonia is the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Strategy implementation requires the co-operation of ministries and the State Chancellery. In addition, active co-operation is pursued with organisations representing the private and third sector as well as research institutions.

One of the priorities of the information policy action plan 2006 were the eInclusion and broadband strategy: ensuring that all Estonian citizens could benefit from the use of computers and Internet, and increasing, thereby, Estonia's competitiveness and the creation of new jobs.

Among others the Strategy is based on the principle that: "the information society is created for all Estonian residents, whereas particular attention is paid to the integration of social groups with special needs, to regional development and to strengthening local self-initiative."
Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013: http://www.riso.ee/en/files/IYA_ENGLISH_v1.pdf

(Source: eInclusion@EU http://www.einclusion-eu.org)

e-Inclusion Legal Framework

Law in practice

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Research in practice

- **Research projects carried out by the Department of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu**

The Department of Journalism and Communication has been carrying out many academic research projects in the area of media systems and usages, integration, transition, relationships between individuals and society etc.
The Department has been also studying the usage of different information and communication technologies among different socio-demographic groups, their abilities to digest the large amount of information provided. Their studies on the usage of new media have been carried out over a long period. Recently they have also focused on e-voting in Estonia and its possible social impacts.
They are currently holding a grant to study social and cultural practices in the information society.
Some research has been funded by the Estonian Science Foundation; the Ministry of Education and Research through Target Funding. The Department of Journalism and Communication has been involved in many international research projects as well and has made a lot of presentations in international scientific conferences.
Please find more information at www.jrnl.ut.ee%20/

- **Study on the Digital Divide in Estonia**

The objectives of the research project were (1) to identify the societal and social factors that inhibit the engagement of new users of information and communication technologies into the information society; (2) to identify those population segments in Estonia that represent a much lesser use of computers and the Internet when compared to their active ICT users reference group, and to clarify the needs, attitudes, prejudices and expectations towards ICT products and services and (3) to identify relevant and effective arguments and channels for the communication of ICT products and services to the above-mentioned segments.
This extensive and original research was carried out in Estonia in 2002.
The research and policy-analysis project was carried TNS Emor and PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies at the order of, with funding from and in direct partnership with the Look@World Foundation, the Open Estonia Foundation, and the State Chancellery in 2002. The study was co-financed by the infoDev Program of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Open Society Institute - Budapest.

More info at: Tarmo Kalvet, Digital Divide in Estonia and How to Bridge It. Executive Summary, Policy Analysis No 1, Tallinn: PRAXIS, 2002, www.praxis.ee/innopubl/

(Source: eInclusion@EU http://www.einclusion-eu.org)

- **Second study on Digital Divide in Estonia**

The objective of the study was to identify attitudes of those who use little or no Internet and identify factors which limit the use of Internet. The study was carried out in the form of focus group interviews combined with quantative data. The study found that among 15-74 years old 70% used internet, of whom 61% had used it in the past 7 days. Mostly the Internet was used as a communication platform, for finding information and using bank services. Still the Internet is not perceived, especially among the elderly as an irreplaceable communication tool, nor does it wholly replace other media.

Most important barriers, which were identified were: lack of skills for finding useful information, lack of computer and internet skills (here language barrier was aslo identified), affordability of equipment and connection (costs of which were sometimes overrated) and knowledge of available content . The study proposed measures to improve affordability along with increasing knowledge of the related costs, increasing knowledge of content along with improvement of services, including services in other languages, especially Russian. To involve the elderly the study suggested using existing social networks. To involve the disabled, the study suggested use of combined measures to tackle different barriers together.
(Source: http://www.riso.ee/et/koordineerimine/yritused/uuringud2008 - in Estonian)

e-Inclusion Actors

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications - http://www.mkm.ee/index.php?keel=en , http://www.riso.ee/en/
Ministry of Education and Research - http://www.hm.ee/
Ministry of Social Affairs - http://www.sm.ee/eng/pages/index.html

e-Inclusion Who is Who

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e.Inclusion Progress by Riga Areas

ICT & Ageing

- **Status in ICT & Ageing**

- Estonian policies related to vocational training are mainly oriented towards unemployed and young people, and not specifically towards older people. Within the Ministry of Social Affairs, though, the topic of furthering educational training for older people and improving ICT skills of older employees is on the agenda. Similarly, e-skills of elderly citizens are being discussed within the digital divide context in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications. Still, wider discourse among policy-makers and politicians is missing.

- Statistics:

- 37% of the persons in the age group of 50-74 years used the internet in the last 6 months prior to the survey, of non-working older persons only 6% used the internet
- 33% of workers use a pc at least once a week

(Source: eInclusion@EU http://www.einclusion-eu.org)

- Public sector e-services are considered difficult to use by slightly more than a quarter of internet users in Estonia, in particular by those in over-60 age group. Thus, computer and internet training for the entire population has to continue.

(Source: "Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013" -http://www.riso.ee/en/files/IYA_ENGLISH_v1.rtf)

- **Actions to support ICT& Ageing**

- In 2007 the Ministry of Social Affairs has introduced a small grants scheme for projects related to improvement of skills and increasing of ICT- uptake by the elderly.

Geographic digital divide

- **Status of Common access to electronic content and services**

- Approximately 90% of the Estonian population lives in areas with immediate availability of broadband internet. Though regionally the spread of the internet is rather even, significant discrepancies still exist locally. The launch of new and advanced services tends to focus in bigger centres, while in dispersed areas high-quality broadband still remains a challenge.
- Despite good and affordable internet availability, computer and internet use in Estonian households still lags behind that in the public and private sector. In spring 2006, 58% of the population aged 15 to 74 used the internet and 39% had an internet connection at home. As mentioned earlier, one of the challenges lies in raising the quality and availability of the internet in different regions, especially in areas of market failure, where it is not profitable for the private sector to invest.

(Source: "Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013" -http://www.riso.ee/en/files/IYA_ENGLISH_v1.rtf)

- **Actions to support Common access to electronic content and services**

- **Village Road 3 (KülaTee 3)**

Village Road 3 is a target programme aimed at the internetization of rural areas. It serves as a follow-up to similar programmes Village Road 1 (aimed at the internetization of local government agencies) and Village Road 2 (targeted at the internetization of public libraries).

The objective of Village Road 3 is to improve the availability of broadband internet in scarcely populated areas, where the private sector has no economic interest to invest. By the time of the completion of the programme, the availability of broadband internet in remote areas will be as high as that in densely populated regions. The target group of the programme includes local government agencies as well as people residing in areas of market failure.
(Source: "Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013" -http://www.riso.ee/en/files/IYA_ENGLISH_v1.rtf)

e-Accessibility

- **Status of e-Accessibility**

In the development of central portals, such as www.eesti.ee, www.riik.ee, etc, the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) guidelines have been followed. However, compliance to WAI standards still needs to be improved in individual public agencies. The objective is to make all public sector websites comply with WAI quality criteria by 2010.

- **Accessibility survey of public sector web sites**

In 2006 the Ministry of Economics conducted a survey based on WCAG on accessibility of public sector web sites. Out of 60 sites of different Estonian public authorities, only 4 met the elementary standards (6,67%). (Source: State Information System - http://www.riso.ee/et/koosvoime/internet/kokkuvote2006, in Estonian)

- **Accessibility surveys by the Estonian foundation of the Visually Impaired (EFVI)**

Conducted by the EFVI (private).
These accessibility surveys were "one-off" activities.
For example in the study "Evaluation of the e-learning course of Estonian e-University" (2005) they tested the accessibility and usability of selected e-Learning courses provided by different universities of Estonia.
The Foundation also participated in other projects on eAccessibility monitoring.
This monitoring activity includes surveys that measure conformance of websites with eAccessibility guidelines.
(Source: eInclusion@EU http://www.einclusion-eu.org)

- **Actions towards e-Accessibility**

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Digital Literacy and Competences

- **Status on Digital Literacy and Competences**

In spring 2006, 58% of the population aged 15 to 74 used the internet and 39% had an internet connection at home. However, internet use does not solely depend on the availability of infrastructure, or the price of service, but, to a considerable extent, also on motivation – the existence of useful and necessary content as well as awareness of opportunities the information society offers. Furthermore, for some non-users the use of the internet is restricted due to insufficient consideration of their specific (i.e. regional, cultural and social) needs and expectations. A significant part of non-users, in particular the skilled labour and the elderly, lack motivation to use ICT due to the shortage of interesting and necessary content. As a result, they do not regard the internet as part of their life. Survey results indicate that eHealth and other social services have a strong potential of boosting motivation to use the internet and e-services.

- **Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences**

- The Look@World Foundation has organised one of the major initiatives that has been focused on bridging digital gap, the "Look@World Internet Training Project".
- In 2007 the Ministry of Social Affairs has introduced small grants for projects upgrading skills of the disadvantaged groups, like the disabled, elderly or the children. Continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills of all members of society is carried out (mainly by non-governmental institutions) in order to ensure their ability to cope in the information society. Providing basic computer and internet training for the elderly and people with special needs will continue.

e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

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

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

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Inclusive eGovernment

- **Status on inclusive eGovernment**

- Progress on inclusive eGovernment involves:

- Innovative mindset in the public sector and its high-quality IT solutions:
  - ✓ service-oriented approach to the development of state information systems and a secure data exchange layer called the X-Road, which constitute the cornerstones of the so-called common service space;
  - ✓ single-point-entry to the state at www.riik.ee;
  - ✓ Citizen portal at www.eesti.ee reflecting the state as an integral whole, where authorized users have three possible roles: that of the citizen, the entrepreneur and the official;

- The largest functioning public key infrastructure in Europe, based on the use of electronic certificates maintained on the national ID card and allowing to considerably improve the security and functionality of IT solutions. More than 80% of the population possess the ID card that enables both electronic authentication and digital signing. Relevant legislation is in place, giving the digital signature equal power with the handwritten one, and imposing a responsibility on public authorities to accept digitally signed documents.

Examples:

- eVoting

At local government elections of 2005, the Estonians could, for the first time, cast their votes electronically, using the secure ID card as an authentication mechanism. eVoting does not aim to replace the traditional voting methods, but provides, with the help of new technology, additional options for enhanced inclusion. Thus, people could vote electronically on advance polling days with a possibility to change their vote on the election day at the polling station, making the previously given eVote void. eVoting was used in the general elections in March 2007.

- Set up a business in two hours!

From January 2007, a business can be set up in Estonia by way of expedite procedure over the web at: http://ekanded.eer.ee/. One of the main differences between the traditional and expedite procedure lies in the fact that in case of the latter, one does not have to go to the notary: persons are identified with the national ID card and documents are concluded by digital signature. In case of the expedite procedure, petitions for entry are reviewed within the next working day after the receipt of the petition. The objective is to achieve a situation, where a business could be set up in 2 hours. Initially, expedite procedure will only be applied to the first entries of limited liability companies, self-employed entrepreneurs, general and private limited partnerships. In addition, businesses will be able to change the data they have submitted in the Commercial Register – this possibility is also open for public limited companies, commercial associations and branch offices. The recent data shows that significant improvement took place in the time needed for setting up a business.
(Source: "Estonian Information Society Strategy 2013" - http://www.riso.ee/en/files/IYA_ENGLISH_v1.rtf)

- **Actions towards inclusive eGovernment**

Continuous work is carried out in following two fields:

- Development of the Citizen portal at www.eesti.ee. For citizens, the portal serves as a secure personalized "virtual office" through which they can, in their different roles, manage their affairs (use public services etc.) and communicate both with the state, enterprises and other citizens. All public sector services will be made available via the Citizen portal in near future.
- Widening opportunities for participation in decision-making process (eDemocracy). Ministries and local governments will develop internet-based environments for the inclusion of citizens and interest groups in decision-making processes. In addition, eVoting will continue to be used.
  (Source: State Information System - http://www.riso.ee/et/koosvoime/internet/kokkuvote2006, in Estonian)