

# Finland 2008



## Country Profile

### Information Society Indicators

- Percentage of households having internet access to the Internet at home 72 %
- Percentage of households with a broadband connection 66 %
- Percentage of individuals (55-74 years old) using the Internet at least once a week 38 %
- Percentage of individuals (55-74 years old) having ordered/bought goods and services for private use over the Internet in the last 3 months 12 %
- Percentage of individuals (55-74 years old) using the internet for interacting with public authorities (in the last 3 months).
- Obtaining information 25 %, downloading official forms 18 %, returning filled forms 9 %

*Source Statistics Finland 2008*

### e-Inclusion History

- e-Inclusion is based on the enabling framework provided by the entire society.
- Equality is a traditional principle, expressed also in the first Constitution of Finland (1919).
- Discrimination on the basis of disability was explicitly prohibited in 1995.
- The development of assistive technologies has contributed to e-Inclusion.
- Non-governmental organisations have an important role in the development of services.

### e-Inclusion Strategy

All sectors of the Government have responsibility for the well being of persons with disabilities. With regard to e-Inclusion, telecommunications, social and health services are key areas.

### Important policies in place

- The Finnish Government under Prime Minister Vanhanen is strongly committed to the goal of promoting the development of the information society. The Government Programme for 2007-2011 pays special focus to promoting the information society for everyday life, a ubiquitous information society. The information society policy aims to transform Finland into an internationally recognized, competitive competence-based service society with a human touch.
- Towards barrier-free Communication - An Action Programme. Ministry of Transport and Communications 26.1.2005. One of the major goals of this program is to increase the prominence and visibility of specific groups of end-users, i.e. disabled and older people in the Communications sector. Closer cooperation and exchange is needed between the sectoral authorities and representatives of specific groups of end-users.
- Assistive devices are provided to the population according to the legal framework of which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for.
- Education, training and research in the Information Society, a strategy prepared by the Ministry of Education has focused on the importance of promoting e-skills for all since year 2000.

### e-Inclusion Legal Framework

#### Law in practice

- Section 6 of the Finnish Constitution (731/1999) states that no one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of disability or other reasons that concerns his or her person.
- Assistive devices can be provided on the basis of:
  - o The Public Health Act (66/1972),
  - o Act on Services and Assistance for the Disabled (380/1987) or
  - o Act on rehabilitation arranged by the Social Insurance Institution (566/2005).
- The purpose of the Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act is to make it easier for the disabled individual to live and participate with others as an equal member of society and to prevent and remove the hindrances and barriers caused by disability. Services for the disabled are designed to help to find the individual solutions required by these people and to support their equality.

- The recommendation JHS 129 - published Dec 2000, amended 25.5.2004 - by the Advisory Committee on Information Management in Public Administration (JUHTA) on the accessibility of public service websites.

## Research in practice

The Academy of Finland provides funding for high-quality scientific research, serves as an expert in science and science policy, and strengthens the position of science and research.

Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, is the main public funding organisation for research and development in Finland. Tekes funds industrial projects as well as projects in research organisations, and especially promotes innovative, risk-intensive projects. Tekes offers partners from abroad a gateway to the key technology players in Finland.

Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) is an impartial expert organisation. Its objective is to develop new technologies, create new innovations and value added thus increasing customer's competencies. VTT is the biggest contract research organisation in Northern Europe. It produces R&D-, testing- and information-services to both the public and private sector as well as to international organisations.

National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) is an expert agency in the field of social welfare and health care. It produces information and expertise for policymakers and other stakeholders. Its core activities are research, development and information production.

## e-Inclusion Actors

- Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- Ministry of Education: Research, adult education, libraries
- Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority
- NGOs

## e-Inclusion Who is Who

- Suvi Lindén , Minister of Transport and Communication
- Paula Risikko, Minister of Health and Social Services
- Sari Sarkomaa, Minister of Education
- Tarja Cronberg, Minister of Labour

### e-Inclusion sub group contact:

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## e.Inclusion Progress by Riga Areas

### ICT & Ageing

#### Status in ICT & Ageing

Today more than 15% of the Finnish population are aged 65 or over.

The ageing of the population must be taken into account when planning information society services.

Ageing will probably have the effect of reducing physical mobility for the very aged, but in the communications sector it is expected that the changes in the population age structure will lead to increased communications traffic and increased consumption of electronic services.

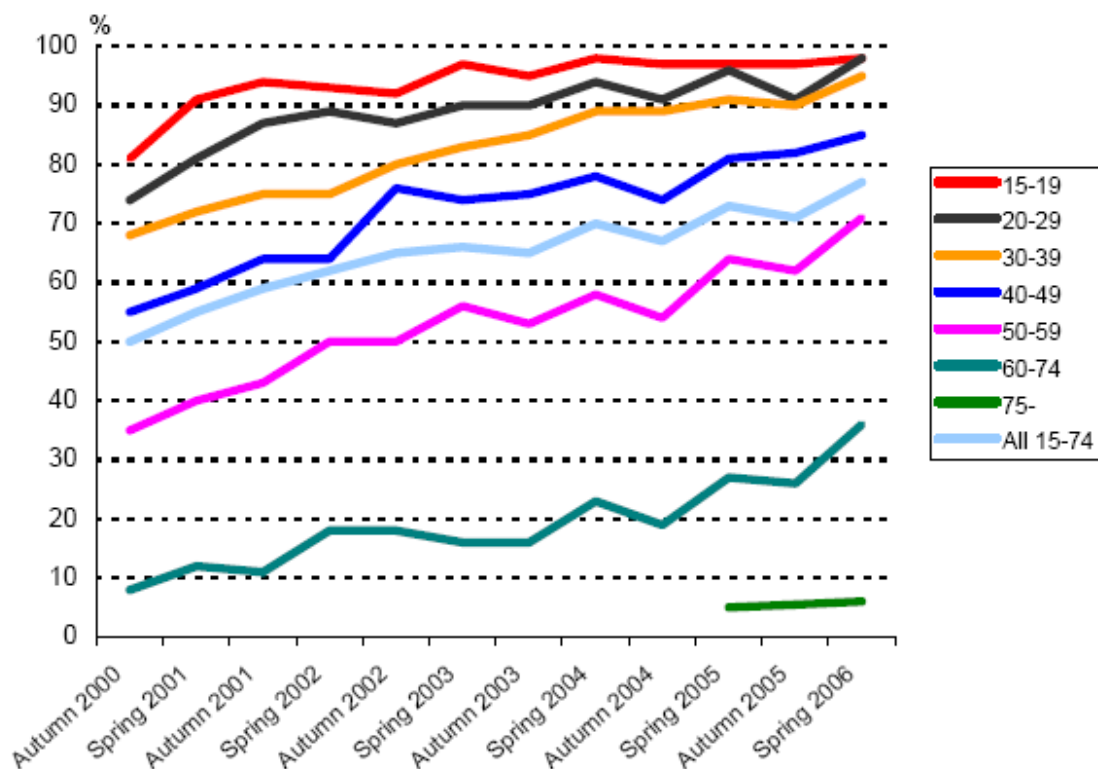
The challenge is to make sure that the communications networks and services in place cover the whole country and that they are genuinely user-friendly.

Special attention must be given to:

- improving the information society capabilities of people of all ages;
- lowering the threshold to using electronic media;
- providing data security and privacy protection;

- creating reliability and trust.

**Figure 1 Use of Internet in last 3 months by age (%) autumn 2000 to spring 2006 / ages 15 +**  
(Source: Statistics Finland, 2006)



### Actions to support ICT& Ageing

A special program concerning citizens' skills in the information society has been launched by the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Government Information Society Programme aiming at equipping all people with essential computer skills. The target groups are especially those outside working life, older, retired and disabled people. Specific measures and information campaigns are targeted at different population groups.

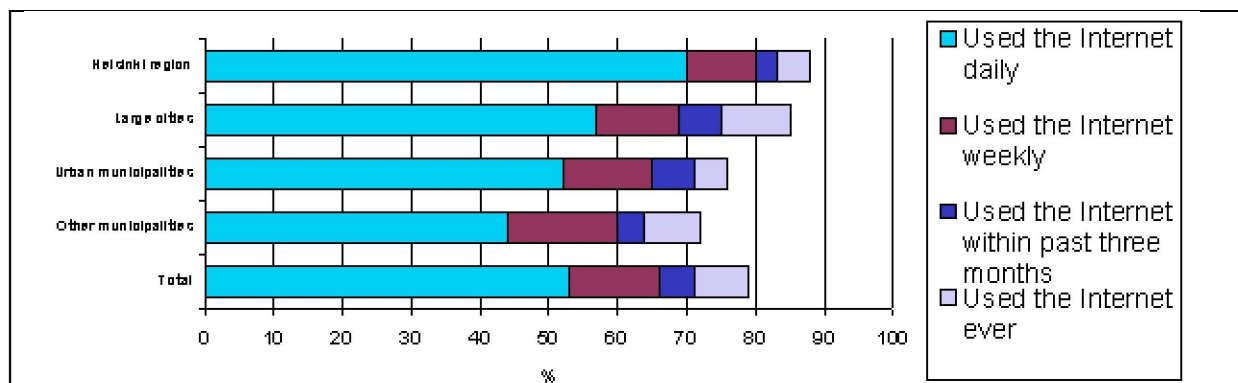
**ENTER ry** is a senior citizens' association for promoting electronic data processing skills. The purpose of the association is to promote senior citizens' ability, readiness and willingness to make use of electronic data processing techniques. To this end it keeps its members up-to-date on current developments. **Enter ry** provides courses (computer, internet, mobile phone use), peer training and support, learning material as well as access points for computer and internet.

Libraries arrange Senior surf sessions and special projects for elderly people financed by the Ministry of Education.

### Geographic digital divide

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

All Finnish public libraries are connected to the Internet for free use of the customers. All libraries offer material also in electronic format. Public libraries serve their customers in electronic communication with the authorities (e-Government)



**Figure 2: Intensity of Internet use according to type of municipality. Population aged 15-74. Nov. 2005.**  
(Source: Statistics Finland. Consumer Survey autumn 2005)

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

- Public libraries have been systematically developed towards e-access and resource centres targeted to all citizens.
- In addition to learning material they provide possibilities to use computer and internet. Staff members give advice and support on basic e-skills.
- Library for Visually Impaired Celia produces and lends Braille books, talking books, electronic books and other special materials.

## e-Accessibility

- **Status of e-Accessibility**

- Several guidelines have been prepared to promote and provide guidance to barrier-free and accessible content production: these are designed to ensure that contents are accessible to all users regardless of the type of browser, limitations imposed by the environment, the end-user's capacities or disabilities or other individual characteristics.
- Adherence to given specifications is particularly important because the operation of several auxiliary devices is based on them.

- **Actions towards e-Accessibility**

Assistive devices are provided to persons with disabilities.

**Towards barrier-free Communication - an action programme.**

Main priorities in the action programme are broadband, digital television, accessible websites, emergency services and positioning, directory services and easy-to-use terminals.

- **Nationwide remote interpreting project**

Co-funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, municipalities and joint municipal authorities, the project was launched in August 2007. During the course of the project, a nationwide service system will be established to supplement the existing support services. The project is administered by the Joint Authority for Disability Services in Uusimaa.

The benefit of remote interpreting is the availability and accessibility of the service irrespective of place. Nationwide on-call service can also be provided through remote solutions.

The project will define the technical solutions required for the remote interpreting service, along with the structure of the service - from customer orders to invoicing.

Organisations representing the users of interpretation services referred to in the Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act have contributed to the development of the remote interpreting service. The system can be extended to cover the interpretation needs of other target groups as well (the Sámi language, immigrants, etc.). Efforts will be made to promote the use of remote interpreting in public services.

### Design for All

- Design for All refers to design processes and strategies that aim to promote the usability and accessibility of environments, products and services for all users.
- Coordinated by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), the Finnish Design for All Network currently involves 38 research institutes, universities and user organisations. The Finnish DfA network is part of the European Design for All eAccessibility network EDeAN.

## Digital Literacy and Competences

### • Status on Digital Literacy and Competences

#### Use of Internet (in last 3 months) in Finland by age and sex in spring 2007

Men Women All

18–29 years	99	99	99
30–39	95	96	96
40–49	89	88	88
50–59	75	77	76
60–74	43	37	39
All	81	77	79

Source: Statistics Finland 2007

### • Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences

In 2004 the Ministry of Education emphasized that a solid education, good general knowledge and ICT skills acquired throughout life create the basis for using information society services. Educational institutions provide students with ICT skills. At the workplace employees acquire knowledge and skills they need in work.

Outside education and employment, libraries and civic organisations play a key role in providing opportunities for people to learn information society skills.

Alongside the formal education system, civic organisations have received financial support in providing activities that promote information society skills - including digital literacy and competences - for all.

Computer Driving Licence is a certification programme that measures the skills needed in Information Technology. The licence is coordinated by TIEKE, Finnish Information Society Development Centre.

## e-Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

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

The Ministry of Education seeks to secure equal opportunities for language and cultural minorities and special-needs groups to participate in culture and express their creativity.

In preparing and drafting legislation, the Ministry takes special care to guarantee equity and equality. The Ministry supports projects and activities geared to improve access to cultural provision and services, also subsidising cultural activities provided by disability organisations and the production of easy-to-read literature.

Subordinate to the Ministry is the Celia Library for the Visually Impaired, which serves persons with reading difficulties.

Finland has strong traditional minorities, such as the Swedish-speakers and the indigenous Saami people.

Other minorities include sign language users, the Roma, Russian-speakers, the Tatars, and more recent immigrant groups. The constantly growing immigration increases multiculturalism.

Different disability groups, religious communities, sexual minorities and certain age groups, notably the young, have their specific cultural characteristics.

The national cultural minorities, such as the indigenous Saami people and the Roma, have a statutory right to maintain and develop their own languages and cultures. The Saami people have cultural autonomy, which is implemented by the Saami Parliament.

Finnish and Swedish are the national languages, which can be used in transactions with authorities. The Saami language has the same status in the Saami Home Area. The rights of people using sign language are also guaranteed by law. In addition, there are provisions in the Administrative Procedure Act entitling people to use foreign languages and get interpretation services for certain purposes.

Immigrants include asylum seekers, refugees, people of Finnish ethnic origin and other foreigners. The largest

immigrant groups are Russians and Estonians. In addition, Finland has refugees from Somalia, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia.

The freedom of religion and expression is enshrined in the Constitution, which guarantees the right to confess and practise a religion, express a conviction or belong or not belong to a religious community.

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

One example of an action is that people whose hearing is severely impaired, who are deaf and blind or suffer from speech disabilities are entitled to free interpretation services arranged by their municipality. Interpretation services are provided in sign language or, for example, using new technology. Deaf-blind clients are entitled to 240 hours of interpretation a year, and others to 120 hours.

Cultural activities of ethnic minorities are supported by state subsidies from the Ministry of Education. Separate budget allocation is given to Sámi parliament to support Sámi culture. Activities supported growingly include IT-aspects.

## **Inclusive eGovernment**

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

The Finnish government is committed to an active promotion of the information society. This work reached a new phase in spring 2003 when the government began the implementation of a policy-programme to facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation in the field of information society. The programme is headed by Prime Minister Vanhanen.

The information Society Policy Programme was intended to improve competitiveness and productivity, to enhance social and regional equality and to advance the well-being and quality of life among citizens through the application of information and Communication technologies in all realms of society.

The Programme consists of eight areas, including areas such as citizen's ability to function in the Information society and make more efficient use of information society services; education and training; online services in public administration; government information management; and legislative measures central to the promotion of the information society.

The Ministry of the Interior supports the public administration - especially on the regional and municipal level - in its aim to develop online services. With this in mind, the Ministry prepares and issues guidelines on electronic transactions and the production of online services, and strives to increase the number of public access terminals and online services in State regional and local administration.

### • **Actions towards inclusive eGovernment**

Many different initiatives and actions have been taken. As a result of the Government Information Society Program co-ordination between different actors has been developed, and the vision of achieving interoperability on the national level has been strengthened. A new nation-wide service for the authentication of citizens interacting with the public sector has been launched in 2006. This platform also integrates on-line payments.

Also the Advisory Committee on Information Management in Public Administration (JUHTA) is important for cooperation in information management between central and local government.

## **Challenges**

As information and Communication technologies more and more are permeating all sectors in society it becomes necessary also for public services and the whole functioning of society to adapt. The utilization of these technologies is a challenge already because the rapid development of technologies and a lack of common standards create a situation where the integration of systems and interoperability of information is both difficult and costly.

From the point of public service, an even greater challenge is that the population does not have access to these technologies on equal terms. Available financial, educational, social and cultural resources to a large degree determine the extent to which different population groups can benefit from services built on the new technologies. For a democratic society it is imperative that these emerging "digital divides" do not become too wide.

e-Inclusion can be properly dealt with only in a comprehensive framework that delivers social inclusion and equality in general. But, at the same time, e-Inclusion poses new challenges that will have to be recognised and dealt with also through targeted measures. Achieving true e-Inclusion will therefore require the collaborative efforts of, and a solid co-ordination between, all major actors in society.

