

ImPaCT in Europe – Improving Person Centred Technology in Europe

Official estimates put the number of Europeans with disabilities at 10% - or 37 million in the EU and 80 million in Greater Europe. Giving an accurate figure is hard, since the term “disability” covers a very wide range of situations, but six out of ten EU nationals say that their immediate or less immediate circle includes someone who has a disability or is an invalid, and one in four has a family member with a disability. Demographic change, and in particular the ageing population of the EU is leading to increased financial pressure on health and social care systems: people live longer and therefore might develop minor disabilities in later life. People with disabilities will also need support for longer periods of time.

There is consequently a clear need to use **Person Centred Technology** (PCT) to provide an enhanced service to end users at a lower unit cost per person. New types of social and health care service provision, such as telehealth, call centres, Assistive Technology for the promotion of health and safety in the home and at work, are becoming increasingly popular across the EU.

Policy makers and practitioners of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and Assistive Technology know that **PCT can drastically improve the quality of life of people with disabilities**, whether physical or intellectual, and increase their chances of living independently. Yet, producers of PCT (industry) and service commissioners/ providers are often working too far away from the end users of the PCT. There is a clear need for greater collaboration and an exchange of views and experiences.

The **Project ImPaCT in Europe – Improving Person Centred Technology in Europe**, a networking project in the field of ICT co-financed by the European Commission Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, **aims to address this situation**.

The objective of the ImPaCT in Europe network is to “accelerate the effective participation of target groups at risk of exclusion and improving their quality of life”, thus contributing to the important objectives outlined in the European i2010 initiative on e-inclusion, by stimulating the effective use of ICT-enabled services and providing competence building opportunities for the end users of Person Centred Technology (PCT) and social care staff via education and training services.

Building on evidence drawn from national and transnational project work and the experience of the partner organisations, the ImPaCT in Europe Network has been created for the mutual exchange of good practice and ideas on the development of Person Centred Technology for the benefit of end users and staff in health and social care across the EU. The network will perform the following important functions:

- Facilitation of exchange and mutual learning between education and training providers within the health and social care sector regarding the development and exploitation of PCT for the benefit of staff and end users;
- Provision of advice and support to organisations and practitioners in the field of ICT on strategies to develop user-led PCT for the benefit of individuals;
- Identification of current good practice in regard to the use of PCT for the promotion of innovative training systems;
- Engagement in publicity and awareness-raising activities using an existing EU-level network to disseminate information to service providers across Europe.

All activities promoted by the network will involve end users of the technology to properly evaluate the effect of PCT on their daily lives.

The partnership is currently carrying out a survey to assess the use of Person Centred Technology across Europe. The data gathered will be used by the partnership to map the current situation and to evaluate and promote the benefits of PCT for people with disabilities.

The survey is brief and user friendly and can be access online at <http://easpd.hft.org.uk/>. Your participation is highly valued and will contribute to the success of the work we are doing.

People with disabilities, service providers, policy makers at all levels, researchers and manufacturers of PCT who are interested in the work carried out by the partnership can get involved and help ensure that we create an effective Network on ICT and Assistive Technology for the mutual benefit of all involved. If interested, please contact Miriana Giraldi, ImPaCT in Europe Project coordinator at miriana.giraldi@easpd.eu or visit our web site: www.impact-in-eruope.eu.

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