



**ACTing “Social Agents Promoting Active Ageing through ICT”**

# CONTEXT ANALYSIS REPORT

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## Project Partners



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## Introduction

In October 2013, the two-year project ACTing “*Social Agents Promoting Active Ageing through ICT*” was launched. ACTing is a transnational project supported by the European Commission (OAPEE, National Spanish Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme) and led by Fundetec. It involves five partners from four different countries (Italy, Romania, Spain and Switzerland).

ACTing aims at transferring a teaching methodology for social agents working in the fields of active ageing and digital inclusion. This methodology mainly focuses on empowering social agents working with senior citizens to promote the social and digital inclusion of the latter. In other words, it is not about teaching seniors how to use ICTs but rather about making them aware that ICTs can be a useful, helpful and powerful means to achieve their objectives, develop their interests, enhance their social participation. In turn, it facilitates active ageing and inclusion into the Information and Knowledge Society for the seniors. Too often, online sources are out of reach for them due to the lack of skills, resources and specialized facilitators, or social agents. Statistics show that the use of ICTs by older people is very low. According to Eurostat, more than 9 out of 10 young people aged 16-24 are regular Internet users, while only 42% in the age group over 55 use the Internet on a daily basis.

The project will be carried out in several steps. The present Report is the result of the first project key activity “Context Analysis”, during which each partner organization conducted a national study. The goal of the analysis is to collect data and trends on elderly people and their use of ICTs and furthermore, to identify the profile of social agents and the main barriers faced by the elderly when using ICTs. Each project partner analysed the current situation in its country, as well as different relevant national initiatives and organised focus groups gathering social agents and seniors, in order to address these issues. Next, based on the data and information collected in this Context Analysis, the ACTing learning methodology will be developed. A training session for social agents will be held, followed by pilot testing in each country.

The ACTing Context Analysis Report draws on desk studies and focus group results elaborated by project partners based in four countries: AEPMR (Romania), ESPLAI and Fundetec (Spain), FMD (Italy) and ICV-Volunteers (Switzerland). It pursues the following broad aims:

1. Clarify the context, key definitions, concepts and terminology that will be used in the ACTing project;
2. Identify and analyse the profile of social agents as facilitators for the social and digital inclusion of the elderly in society, in the four partner countries;
3. Identify the main interests, difficulties and obstacles that senior citizens (55 years +) face in using ICTs in their daily life, in the four partner countries;
4. Elaborate a proposal of the key elements and working model to inform the following phase of the project: the “*Mayores con Iniciativa*” methodology transfer and adaptation process (WP4).

## *Methodology*

The national context analyses were elaborated using a common research framework developed by FMD in cooperation with Fundetec and the other partners. Each partner organisation was requested to:

- Collect national data and trends on elderly people and the use of ICTs;
- Identify a minimum of three active ageing and e-inclusion initiatives;
- Organise focus groups involving 6-8 social agents working as facilitators for the social and digital inclusion of elderly people, and 6-8 seniors (55 years +).

Partners were provided with a list of selection criteria (see box 1.1) to guide their search for active ageing and e-inclusion initiatives, including a report template to structure the national context analysis data, the final sample of initiatives and the focus group results in each country. The template specified the particular questions to engage with during the analysis of the context, as well as the issues to pay particular attention to when reviewing available documentation on the initiatives. National teams were, for example, requested to study the extent to which an initiative contributed to the elderly people's active participation in society and social cohesion, the degree to which it might promote 'having fun', and the kinds of skills and knowledge required at various levels (organisation, social agents) to reach the aims of the initiative.

### *Box 1.1 Criteria for the selection of initiatives*

- Initiatives need to involve older people (55 years +) in active ageing, social and digital inclusion activities;
- Initiatives need to have an impact at national level;
- Initiatives collected should possibly involve different social agents profiles and include/take place in different settings (i.e. school, formal/non-formal community environment, etc.);
- Initiatives need to be documented and, preferably, evaluated.

Partners were also provided with specific guidelines to conduct focus groups with social agents and elderly people, including:

- Selection criteria for the participants;
- Information required from each participant (anonymous questionnaire);
- Questions to be asked to the participants;
- Guiding principles for the group;
- Steps in planning and tips for conducting the focus groups.

Each partner was requested to organise a total of three focus groups in the same day: two parallel sessions with two separate groups (one with social agents and another one with elderly) and a final session with the joint group. Different questions were asked to each of the parallel groups (social agents, elderly), and two final questions to the joint group. The organization of focus groups was aimed at gathering information about

target group profiles in terms of expectations, experience and needs. Specifically, at:

- Having a clearer picture of the social agent profiles in partner countries in terms of awareness of ICT advantages; motivations and expectations; educational/professional background and capacity; ICT capacity and use at work; strategies (learning approaches and methodology used); needs and training needs; organizational context of social agents' work, etc.
- Understanding what the main interests of the elderly people (55 years +) are and the barriers they face in using ICTs in their daily lives in partner countries.

### *Report structure*

**Part one** of the report outlines the ACTing project contextual and conceptual framework, clarifying the definitions used in the ACTing project and in the present report.

**Part two** of the report displays some context information related to the elderly people and use of ICTs in the four project countries.

**Part three** gives an overview of the various active ageing and e-inclusion learning initiatives that were identified for purposes of the current study. Drawing on the national desk studies and research literature on the subject, it also analyses the benefits of social and digital inclusion initiatives for older people, the role of the social agents as e-facilitators and trainers, the necessary skills to design and deliver them, and finally, preconditions for, and possible obstacles to success.

**Part four** reports the findings of focus groups organised by each partner at national level.

## 1. The ACTing project framework

The notion of Active Ageing has been defined by the WHO as ‘the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age’<sup>1</sup>. Active ageing aims to promote the idea of the older citizen as a full member of society, fulfilled from both professional and personal points of view, playing an active role and as independent as possible.

The development of ICT skills for everyday life can be an effective mean to address many of the problems associated with aging, such as loss of memory, impaired vision and hearing, lack of communication, access to information, lack of mobility and loss of independence etc.

The ACTing project is aimed at transferring a specific working methodology which strengthens capacities, skills and attitudes of **social agents** working with senior citizens and ICT as a tool to improve their quality of life and encouraging and empowering them to be active in the Information Society.

ACTing intends to help seniors in reducing the digital gap and taking advantage of ICTs for daily activities and interests, through a methodology designed ad hoc in the original project “*Mayores cON Iniciativa*” implemented by Fundetec, which will be adapted, transferred and tested with social agents from all the project countries. The project methodology identifies the barriers elderly see and fear in ICT, proposing efficient solutions to help them to be active actors in the Information Society. The model is flexible and transferable, being mainly addressed to social agents active in fields related to both ICT and elderly.

The ACTing project is specifically aimed at:

- Promoting an **innovative training methodology**, not based on traditional lectures, seminars or courses on standard subjects, but using an “on demand” approach that responds to elderly people’s specific needs and interests. This methodology is facilitated by the social agents;
- Communicate to seniors the **benefits** that ICT can provide them at personal, and professional level to achieve social and technological integration;
- Provide **support and assistance** to elderly people in order to discover the usefulness of ICT in everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of the World Health Organisation, available at [http://www.who.int/ageing/active\\_ageing/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/)

## 2. Elderly people and the digital world

Europe's population is living longer and is in better health than ever before. In the European Union, the proportion of the population aged over 65 is expected to rise to 30% by 2060, with 12% of the population expected to be aged 80 or over<sup>2</sup>. People are working longer and contribute as active citizens in the later years of their lives. The acquisition of digital competences is an important element of supporting active ageing, opening up new learning opportunities for this group, either in formal or in informal settings.

Regarding the use of ICTs, and in particular the use of Internet within the population, the Digital Agenda for Europe has a key performance target to halve the number of non-users from 30% (in 2009) to 15% by 2015. Non-use of the Internet is a major policy concern in Europe. While the rate of non-users continued to fall in 2012 bringing it closer to this target, 22% of the EU population has still never used the Internet. Across Europe rates of regular use of Internet are still rather dispersed and the rankings of countries with the highest and lowest rates have changed very little over time. The highest rates of regular use of Internet are found in the Nordic countries (Iceland (95%), Norway (93%), etc.) where rates are approaching saturation. With 85% of household connected to Internet, **Switzerland** ranks well above the European average. At the other end of the scale, the countries with the lowest rates of regular use of Internet, such as **Romania** (43%) and **Italy** (53%) with around half of their population, or more, not using the Internet on a regular basis<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, progress in rates of regular use of Internet over the last year shows that catch-up is taking place: on average, countries with below (EU) average rates of regular use of Internet have made more progress than those with above average rates (e.g. Romania (+6 p.p.) and **Spain** (+3 p.p.)). The major exception here is Italy: while Italy made some progress (+2 p.p.) in increasing its rate of regular use of Internet over the last year, it was lower than the average in the EU, thus resulting among the countries with the lowest rates of regular use of Internet in the EU27+.

The national data analysed in the four project countries gave us precious information on the perception and use of ICTs by elderly people. Elderly have changed their habits from previous stages. They have a less passive attitude in relative terms to the possibilities available to them (from the family and different sectors, including the public) with activities that fit with their interests. In the coming years, many people used to use these technologies in their daily life or work, will exceed 65, which predicts a near-natural increase in the use of technologies that will be larger with each generation. In this case the challenge is to maintain the interest of these people for ICT, offering them resources and services adapted to their changing needs, preventing them from falling voluntarily or inadvertently, in the digital divide.

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2012) The 2012 Ageing Report

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/DAE%20SCOREBOARD%202013%20-%203-INTERNET%20USE%20AND%20SKILLS.pdf>

However, there are notable differences in the use of new technologies based on the level of education received, as well as the economic, being smaller distances derived from differences in habitat. The 3 main aspects that influence the attitude of the older person in relation to ICT are:

- The previous technological training as active workers (housewives and people over 80 are the people furthest from ICT).
- Issues related to the mental and physical situation, which strongly limit learning abilities and ICT accessibility.
- The social and family context of the senior adult, which is a major factor which condition in excess both the accessibility and the acquisition of the will to learn ICT.

The next paragraphs contains a focus on each of the four country analysed.

### *Italy*

According to the report of NOI Italy (ISTAT 2014), the Italian population is registered over 59 million people. More than 19 million are over 55 as registered by the 2011 national population census. Regarding the computer skills of the population, ISTAT informs that 53% of the Italians aged between 16 and 74, 53% have used the Internet at least once a week during the last three years, while the European average has been registered around the 70%. The same source reveals that only 33,5% of the Italian population aged between 16-74 connect to the Internet on a daily basis. In the report it is possible to note that considering an age segmentation, only the 50% of the over 54 connect to the internet on a daily basis.

The 2013 report published by CENSIS indicates that the proportion of users of the network is wedged at 21.1% among the elderly (over 65). Therefore it seems clear that the percentage of "silver surfer" (i.e. older people who know and use the web) is continuously increasing over the years. By the way, according to ISTAT data, in the last year, has been registered an increase of 2.5-3% of the use of the internet in the age groups ranging from 45 to 74 years, namely that of not "digital natives." It is possible to consider that, as a projection of reality, even the network is aging. This is clearly highlights in a recent analysis of Nielsen, which notes that if in 2000 people over 55 were very few, during the last decade there has been a gradual increase in the number of mature and elderly people surfing the web, who now make up 14% of the online population, or 3.6 million of Italians. (Audiweb, 2011). The most noticeable acceleration has occurred since 2007, the year in which the "silver surfers" have almost doubled. In 2014, over 55% who can considered as active users (users for at least one day on an average day of the selected period - February 2014) can be estimated to be 17,8% of the country population.

### *Romania*

The Romanian population is rapidly aging: 19% of Romanians have over 60 years, that percentage will reach 25% in 2050, according to a study of the Center for Demographic Research "Vladimir Trebici" published in 2007 with support from UNFPA. Regarding the computer skills of the population, only 8.1% is high skilled and 13.5% is low skilled

compared to the EU average. In the research done within the Vintage project<sup>4</sup> about the usage of ICT by elders in Romania and the other partners countries, was revealed the fact that 134 of the Romanian respondents have access to a computer and 198 have no access to a computer; Romania has the lowest level of internet connections at home, with 134 having a connection and 199 not having an internet connection at home. The conclusion of the research was that there is a strong correlation between the number of people who already use computers and have a computer available to them at home or in a local place which is easy to access and the lower levels of support needed to help them in accessing computers or the internet.

### *Spain*

In the last decade, the Spanish population is registered of over 46 million people. The number of senior adults exceeds 7.5 million (17%), of which, 12% are people aged between 65 and 80 years (2010 data). In Spain, 57% of people over 55 have never used a computer, 64% have never used the Internet and only 29% do so at least once a week. These are values that are far behind the European average. 68% of Spanish households have Internet access, which means that 25 million Spaniards ever used the Internet in 2012, of which 700,000 did so for the first time in 2012. Almost all Spanish households have access to Internet via broadband.

More than half of Spanish Internet users connect to the network every day. Most Internet users use the network to send /receive emails, searching for information and access to news and media. Half of Internet users perform more complex activities such as participating in social networks or downloading and consuming content such as games, movies or music. 39% of Spaniards have used laptops or mobile phones to access the Internet. And it highlights the use of instant messaging. As for social networks, Facebook is the most used virtual community.

### *Switzerland*

In Switzerland, the Confederation and the Federal Council, its executive branch, has defined its national strategy regarding the information society that includes the appropriate use of information and communication technologies by elderly people. The National Action Plan points out the main lines and the specific objectives to reach by 2015. The main principle is that “all Swiss residents should be in a position to use ICT in their private and professional life” (e-inclusion, 2012). In order to ensure social cohesion, this principle includes the needs of potentially disadvantaged groups such as the elders, and also, given the particularities of the country, people with a migration background and minorities. Indeed, there is still a large old migrant population, given the fact that after retirement, a third of the migrant population goes back to their home country, a third moves back and forth and a third stays definitely in Switzerland (Migraweb, 2010). Regarding the use of ICTs, and in particular the use of Internet within the population, the percentage of the population using this tool intensively ranges from 97% and 88.9% between the age group 14 till 49. If we look closer at older generation, this figure drops to 79.7% for the 50-59, 58.8 % among the 60-69, and 28.6% among the 70 and older (Federal Statistical Office, 2013). An interesting aspect of Switzerland is that, by international standards, the frequency of Internet use by old people is quite

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.vintageproject.eu/index.php/en/theproject/documents/Reports/WP2%20-%20Social%20Research/detail>

high. The digital divide between the different age groups is less important in this country. Also, there are more and more Internet users among elders, but there is still progress to be made. Regarding the daily use of the Internet, the available information indicates that Internet is used by the elderly mainly to specific and clearly identifiable goals, such as exchanging emails, gathering information and answering their daily activities, especially on public transportation schedule, on administrative and health services. They use tools such as Google or Wikipedia but they are less aware of “Web 2.0” tools and other activities like e Banking, downloading, Skype, or shopping (Federal Statistical Office, 2013; OFCOM, 2009).

### 3. Active ageing and e-Inclusion initiatives at a glance

In total, we analysed 12 best practices (please see annex 1) in four countries (Italy, Romania and Spain and Switzerland) focused on active ageing and e-inclusion activities addressed to older people (55 years +). We also included intergenerational initiatives, taking into consideration their relevance in terms of learning and social innovation. In these initiatives young people (students, volunteers) teach basic ICT skills to seniors. The main objectives are to close the digital gap, ensure equal access to information and opportunities and to create a bridge between generations.

The initiatives analysed took place at local and national level in different project settings such as public spaces, shopping malls, offices of the promoting organizations, schools, social and elderly centres. In 3 of the initiatives there was an important transnational component. These activities were developed within the framework of European Commission's programmes and in relation to the "European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations: 2012", which provided financial support for such projects.

In Italy and Romania, the European project **V.In.T.Ag.E.** "*Valorisation of Innovative Technologies for Aging in Europe*" involved the development of special software to promote ICT skills for seniors (65+) as a means to a better quality of life and an improved self-management. In the same countries, the **CARER+** "*Developing digital competences of care workers to improve quality of life of older people*" project was aimed at identifying new competences to support older persons in their home – anticipating a new and vital role for care workers, as a 'Carer+'. It developed a set of learning paths and educational resources for mobile and work based learning, that respond to major challenges to their professionalization: isolation, access to technology, flexibility of study modes, lack of support and motivation, formal accreditation, recognition of prior experience, and scalability. Another initiative took place in Spain and in Italy, with the European project **TKV** "*The Knowledge Volunteers*", which promoted digital competencies for seniors at risk of exclusion through non-formal education and intergenerational activities. In this case, young volunteers, teachers and seniors could also make use of online social networks as a means of virtual contact and learning.

The initiatives analysed have a variable duration ranging on average from one year to three years (2010-2013), with the exception of four long-term projects still on-going which now can be considered as best practices at the national level: Cyberthé (2010) and Cité Seniors (2006) in Switzerland, La abuela es una cuentista (2004) in Spain and Nonni su Internet (2002) in Italy.

In 2006, the City of Geneva opened **Cité Seniors** (City seniors) and created an information and meeting space offering several activities in order to address the needs of the elderly. The municipality provides a space dedicated to computer and information technologies and offers courses and workshops in this domain. The objective is to bridge the digital divide, meaning that it ensures that the public can discover the

opportunities of Internet, to acquire and maintain the skills essential to technologies use. The elderly can become familiar with computers; discover digital photography and new trends on the Internet. In the initiative **La abuela es una Cuentista** (Grandma is a storyteller), aimed at promoting the use of technology and the access to ICT tools, the seniors recorded their stories on video with a webcam and upload it in a YouTube channel created specifically for this initiative. The **Nonni su internet** project started in 2002 and was promoted by Fondazione Mondo Digitale with the support of Municipality of Rome after the request of the Italian Minister of Innovation to plan activities addressing the problem of the digital divide. It is considered an Intergenerational Learning best practice in Italy. This approach is used in order to respond to a clear policy initiative and to other needs related to social isolation and drop-out: schools are considered a hot spot not only for education but also for exchanging experiences, a point of reference for the entire local community.

The following tables provide a synthesis of the main information collected through the literature review and the analysis of case studies.

Goal and Objectives	Target Group	Key Activities
All the initiatives analysed aimed at promoting and reinforcing digital competences for seniors through <b>non-formal education activities</b> .	Seniors adults (55 years +); Beginners and advanced ICT users.	<b>Training courses/sessions</b> on ICT (traditional, thematic and online courses): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training sessions for the trainers;</li> <li>- Organization of courses for elderly.</li> </ul> Use of different hardware and software (e.g. pc, smart-phone, tablet, camera, internet, social media, communication tools, YouTube, etc.); Creation of a network of volunteer internet advisors/trainers.
In four of the initiatives (Italy, Spain and Switzerland), there was an important <b>intergenerational component</b> : reduce the digital gap of elderly people by promoting an intergenerational dialogue and exchange between youth and elderly.	Seniors adults (55 years +); Students (8-19) and Teachers.	Development of a learning programme for adults based on 4 Teaching Modules and 3 Teaching Guides (The ABC of ICT, Social Networking, E- Government and Easy technologies); Training of the young trainers and the teachers; Pilot training courses (in schools, elderly centres, associations etc.): young students as tutors for elders under the active supervision of an adult teacher; Production of Case Studies.
V.In.T.Ag.E. project aimed at developing a <b>special software</b> to promote ICT skills for seniors (65+) as a means to a better quality of life and an improved independence.	Seniors adults (65 years +)	Development of a special software addressed to elderly; Training course on ICT; Local networking for the collection of obsolete hardware and regeneration with open source software.

CARER+ project aimed at developing <b>digital competences of care workers</b> to improve quality of life of older people.	Care workers Care givers Elderly people	Develop a list of ICT knowledge and skill-based competences for care workers; Develop the online learning environment, learning paths and educational resources for mobile and work based learning addressed to care workers.
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Role of Social Agents	Teaching Methodology
V.In.T.Ag.E. project in Italy and Romania: <b>staff and volunteers involved in non-profits associations</b> which provide services to the elders were trained and supported the activities with the elderly.	Face-to-face training session for social agents. Online training course for elderly through an e-learning platform. Pedagogical characteristics of the training: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One topic per day</li> <li>2. Revise: practice makes perfect, so revise often. The more you revise, the closer you get to mastery.</li> <li>3. Discuss and compare: group works and debates where learners can compare their difficulties and relative solutions.</li> <li>4. Pauses and breaks: each learner is free to take a rest whenever he or she wants without losing the explanation of core concepts.</li> <li>5. Socialization: the group of learners are invited to participate in several social activities out of the classroom.</li> </ol>
CARER+ project in Italy and Romania: <b>care workers and caregivers</b> were equipped with the required set of digital competences that will allow them to support older people in their use of ICTs and Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) technologies.	An online learning environment comprising social networking service and e-Portfolio system for the care workers.
In the FFI project (Switzerland) social agents are <b>senior volunteers</b> (not certified adult trainers) with different roles: <i>Instructors</i> : selected volunteers who can deliver workshops and then can share their knowledge to their peers without ICT's skills. <i>Assistants</i> : assist the instructors during the workshops by providing hands-on support. <i>Ambassadors</i> : Specific persons whose goals are to create local interest groups and set up training sessions. Also in charge of the Help Point.	Based on co-creation, action learning and peer learning: "learners are not simply passive recipients of knowledge but they are active in developing it". Two kinds of IC workshops: PC Basis and Advanced Courses (creating a photo book, shopping and plan trips online, send and receive email...).
In the Cyberthé initiative (Switzerland) social agents are <b>young volunteers</b> from	Intergenerational Learning; Safe and supportive environment; Empowerment:

<p>“Motivation Semester” (transitional measure between school and working world), whose work is coordinated by the organizers and senior members of Motivation Semester.</p> <p>For thematic workshops: experts on the question addressed (i.e. Bank employee for e-banking issues, police officer for Internet scam issues etc.).</p>	<p>in a friendly atmosphere, the seniors are guided by juniors starting their working life and who are currently looking for first professional activity. The young people can answer their individual questions.</p> <p>Delivery of traditional workshops (beginners users) and thematic workshops on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security and maintenance of PC, Mac and tablet - Internet and Health issues</li> <li>- Internet Scams</li> <li>- E-banking</li> <li>- On-line travel services</li> <li>- Use of "Guichet unique" (Public services website)</li> <li>- On-line shopping</li> <li>- On-line gaming and music, book and application downloading</li> </ul>
<p>The City Seniors (Switzerland) initiative involves employs <b>social workers</b>, who are then trained in ICT.</p>	<p>As a social service, they use a social approach. The idea is not to give participants a diploma but rather have a socialization environment.</p> <p>Courses and workshops (2013-2014): for 8 persons.</p> <p>Introductory courses: How to use the iPad, Discover the computer, How to use Internet, Digital photography with Picasa, Windows 7, Gimp, Create your blog, PC assistance and Mobile phone, Create your family tree, Burn your vinyl records to a CD.</p>
<p>In the TKV (Italy and Spain) and Nonni su Internet initiatives – Grandparent on the Internet (Italy) the social agents are <b>school students</b> coordinated by an <b>expert ICT teacher</b>.</p>	<p>Inter-generational and peer-to-peer learning model: school students teach pc, internet and technologies to the elderly under the supervision of expert teachers.</p> <p>Classes of 20-25 elderly people are formed at each participating school/elderly centre. The ideal student/elder ratio is one to one or two to one.</p> <p>The training kit provides different instructions for use for the different parties involved (Guidelines for Grandparents, Guidelines for tutors, Guidelines for teachers)..</p>

**How do seniors benefit?**

**Learning outcomes & ICT skills**

Learning basic ICT skills and use of social media represent the main learning outcome for seniors in the initiatives analysed. The participants also mentioned awareness of the potentialities of ICT and improvement of memory, reading and writing skills as learning outcomes. In addition, seniors learn about young people's lives and how to communicate with them. The contact with young people positively influences their self-esteem, improves their social and mentoring competences and their general health and wellbeing. Seniors feel valued and feel that their role in society is recognized. Depending on the specific focus of the initiative and the personal interests and hobby, seniors can also learn about many different areas, such as nature, cooking, arts, theatre, storytelling and so forth.

**Active participation in society & social cohesion**

Our analysis highlights that in the majority of case studies an important benefit for seniors was also in terms of active participation in society and social cohesion. Senior adults lose fears of using the computer to communicate with family and friends as well as meet other worlds and ways of thinking. The experience was useful to promote social values and the development of life-skills such as patience, communication skills, cooperation and active participation in the community and solidarity and dialogue between generations. In some case studies the intergenerational methodology provided beneficiaries with the opportunity to learn much more than just ICT. Also, the volunteering experience helped them understand how they can actively participate in society and has increased their self-awareness and motivation.

**Having fun**

Senior adults had fun during the training. They helped each other among peers and were also encouraged by family and friends. The success of many initiatives analysed is based on the pleasure to meet new people and having fun together. Interviews to youth reveal that the courses experience was a chance to have fun and meet other people from the younger and older generation. Many students built true friendships and declare they will continue meeting the new elder friends visiting them at the social or elder centre or even inviting them at school parties.

## Necessary Skills to design and deliver active ageing and e-inclusion initiatives

### Organisational level

The review also sought to identify the skills and knowledge required to reach project aims. At the organisational level, **strong organisational and coordination skills** were emphasized in almost all instances as well as the good communication skills (good dissemination channels) and **networking ability** to engage and cooperate with different kinds of organisations, - centres for older people, local authorities, churches - and create strong working relationships between them. In this regard, working in partnership and a commitment to common goals were mentioned a number of times.

Many initiatives also emphasized skills and knowledge relating specifically to **intergenerational working** - i.e., knowledge about peer-to-peer education and child and senior psychology, and softer skills such as: capacity to create synergies between generations; creativity, flexibility, interest, motivation and openness. Depending on the focus of the project - familiarity with specific knowledge domains was also highlighted. In the case of initiatives, which were parts of European Commission funded projects; English language and project management skills were also emphasized in addition to knowledge of EU society and cultures.

### Social Agents

The most frequently mentioned skills for social agents concerned **attitudinal and interpersonal skills** and **good knowledge of ICT**. The following were highlighted: team working and team building capacities; openness, in relation to working with youth, as well as ageing; being empathetic and tolerant and having a supportive attitude. Also included were facilitation skills (i.e., being able to ensure smooth interaction between generations and communication skills and being proactive.

## 4. Focus Groups Discussion Results

In line with the ACTing project objectives, this part of the national context analysis aimed to provide systematized information from the field (at local level in the four project countries) to facilitate the implementation of the following phase of the project.

In the next phase the “*Mayores con Iniciativa*” methodology will be transferred to four different national contexts, to be used in the pilot courses addressed to social agents. By knowing better each national context (pilot area), the ACTing partnership will be able to adapt the different training activities described in the “*Mayores con Iniciativa*” and carry them out in each country.

The focus groups with the project target groups - social agents (facilitators for social and digital inclusion of elderly people) and elderly (55 years+) – aimed at gathering information about their profiles in terms of expectations, experience and needs. Specifically:

1. Identify the social agent profiles in project countries: awareness of ICT advantages; motivations and expectations; educational/professional background and capacity; ICT skills and use at work; strategies (learning approaches and methodology used); needs and training needs; organizational context of social agents work (foundation, volunteer organization, company, public organization etc.); etc.
2. Identify the main interests, needs and concerns of the elderly (55 years +) in using technology (computer, Internet, mobile, etc.).

### *Selection Criteria*

- Social agents with a minimum of working experience as facilitators for the social and digital inclusion of elderly people, and possibly belong to different sectors (public administration, NGOs, associations etc.).
- Elderly (55 years +) willing to acquire digital competences.

### *Findings from the focus groups*

Each ACTing partner conducted focus groups involving **6-8 social agents** working as facilitators for the social and digital inclusion of elderly people, and **6-8 elderly persons** (55 years +). A total of **3 focus groups** were organised in each country on the same day:

- Focus group 1 involving social agents
- Focus group 2 involving elderly people
- Focus group 3 involving elderly people and social agents together

## **Social Agent Perspectives (focus group 1)**

- What **skills, knowledge** and **methods** are required to implement an initiative aimed at promoting e-inclusion and active ageing of elderly people?
  - Strong social and communication skills
  - Ability to motivate the elders and engage them in the activities
  - Patience, empathy, mediation and listening skills
  - Organizational skills (planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the activities)
  - Action-oriented pedagogy
  - Good ICT knowledge
  - Knowledge of the cultural and social context
  - Sociological and pedagogical background
  - Knowledge of e-government services

Other aspects identified as important by the social agents:

- Deep understanding of the users' needs and what they really know about the use of ICTs. The importance of ICTs is not about tools, but about usability and how they can really be a benefit to senior adults.
  - Explaining the same concept in many different ways, illustrating it with lots of practical examples and cases.
  - Knowing how and where to look for content and resources that are consistent with and meet the needs of users. This will facilitate the learning process.
  - Using a simple and practical methodology that is suitable for senior adult devices.
  - Digital literacy exercising through games motivates the group a lot.
  - Creating a glossary that can help users to better understand the world of ICT.
  - Making them work together, create synergies among peers, it is important for the group.
  - Removing their fears through practical exercises.
  - The recognition of the work done through a certificate and group photo helps motivation and confidence at both individual and group level.
- What **challenges** are commonly faced during the delivery of these initiatives and what are the **success factors**?

The main challenge identified by the social agents was the capacity to build a confident relationship with the elderly in order to motivate and engage them increasing their self-confidence in learning about and using ICT. The main success factors are: **listening skills and patience**, in order to understand the specific and individual needs. The key factor is the capacity to offer a **customised training based on the specific needs and interests of the elderly**. Flexibility, generosity, capacity to create a collaborative environment and to inform elderly about the benefits of digital tools to improve their daily life, also emerged as successful factors in the delivery of such initiatives. The activities

should also contain **relaxing and fun activities**.

### ***Elderly Perspectives (focus group 2)***

- What is your **motivation** to use the technology?

Their motivation is twofold: to be able to use tools they think to be valuable and helpful, but also to learn in a friendly space and environment, where conviviality is the norm. They learn together, they help each other and they meet sometimes each other outside the workshops. Social interaction is the key. They are also proud when they learn something new and when they can show the newly acquired knowledge to their relatives.

- What do you **use** the technology for?
  - Access new information from different domains easily and fast.
  - Be up to date
  - Communicate and socialize more efficiently, but also curiosity, need for knowledge and learning
  - Communicate with relatives and friends
  - Curiosity
  - Have fun
  - Improve memory
  - Listen to music
  - Internet search engines, Facebook, games, chat, email, word and excel and photo editing.
- What **advantages** do you gain by using technology?
  - Saving time and money, finding information easily and fast, different sources of information, access to information from different institutions
  - Entertainment, interaction with others
  - Improve memory
  - Tourism
  - Discovering new hobbies
  - Organising family albums
  - Saving paper
- What are the main **barriers** and **fears** do you face in using and/or accessing technology?
  - Fear of breaking the computer or getting a virus.
  - Bureaucratic procedures or shopping online, do not dare. They feel insecure.
  - They fear that youth will lose the ability to relate to them. Risk of isolation, playing online games alone.

- At this question, the Romanian elders unanimously answered that the main barrier would be their lack of language skills (specifically English) and that technologies are rapidly changing and they can't keep up the pace.

### ***Elderly and Social Agents Perspectives (focus group 3)***

- How could **ICT help elderly** persons to easily improve their quality of life (developing their active participation in society)?

The participants answered that ICT offers a lot of benefits to the elderly and to the community: exclusion of social isolation as they can communicate, socialize easier and make new friends; keep in contact with family and friends especially the ones that left the country; enhance their personal autonomy and help them to have an independent and an active life; stimulate their curiosity and have fun.

- Would you be interested in participating in the ACTing project?

In all the four countries, the participants showed their interest in participating in the ACTing project activities.

## Conclusions

As a result from the analysis, it can be concluded that use of ICT technologies is on the rise in all the four countries, with a high interest shown by the people aged 55+. Big effort has already been made in all the countries to organize and provide ICT literacy courses for elderly people and associations, libraries and community centres provide access to computers in many places. While there are initiatives for the elderly organized within local projects or European ones, the initiatives need to be very much attentive to the elders' needs and interests. However, it should be noted that if ICT usage for learning purposes and participation is to be promoted, then course contents must take this specifically into account. Current ICT tools are often not user-friendly for older people, and this makes it more difficult for them to use them for learning purposes or as a part of everyday activities. A practical problem for using ICT is often the user interface, which is rarely designed for older people.

Elders are interested in communicating and finding necessary information by using user-friendly and national language based technologies. Technologies' evolution is one of their concerns, as it takes time for them to master a tool that can quickly become obsolete. Information overload is another issue emerged from the analysis. Elders are overwhelmed with information on Internet and sorting between what is right or fake can be laborious. Finally, issues of security, data protection, and confidentiality also were mentioned as main fears elderly face in using technology. However, they consider being the first victims of phishing or Internet scams, based on their own experience. They also fear "Big Brother", the fact that masses of information have been gathered without their consent, that they are being traced.

As described in the results of the focus groups, the social agents involved in ICT project for the elders identified **communication and social skills** as the most important ones as there is a need to interact with the elders and know how to understand their needs. Patience, affection, empathy and listening skills were also identified as important dimensions from all the four groups. A good social agent should know his participants, their needs and desires, their problems and how they can be solved with the use of ICT. Communication skills are important in order to adapt to the communication style of the others and know how to handle different types of persons. Connected with this, ability to motivate and engage people and social skills and competences emerged as necessary to interact with the others appropriately and accordingly to the situation. Other skills mentioned were the **organizational** ones as needed to implement an initiative taking into consideration all aspects. As the initiatives are promoting e-inclusion, a must would be to have **good knowledge of IT technologies** from the use of different gadgets, to the use of social media and to be always up to date with the new technologies. However, all the social agents stressed the importance of the **pedagogical approach** more than the ICT competences in their work. The social agents are not necessarily computer specialists. They consider themselves as social workers, with a social background. Since they are dealing daily with people who often live alone, establishing social relations with them and among them is essential, by discussing, organizing lunch,

or having outside activities.

Even though they recognize that, in general, more and more elderly people are familiar with the use of new technologies compare to 10 years ago, there still exists a certain part of the population without any ICTs skills. For social agents, what has evolved is their motivation to learn. Nowadays, the elderly people feel compelled to learn, because they are daily exposed to new technologies and they fear to be left behind. Even though some elderly people might be defiant, they still need to go online to get the information, to order a plane ticket, etc. Another interesting fact is that social agents have noticed a change in seniors' use of new technologies. They tend to switch from computer to tablets, such as Ipad. They are user-friendlier; they are lighter and thus can be carry easily.

Regarding the teaching methods in digital literacy courses, an **active-oriented pedagogy** is needed. It is not enough to simply start the class without adapting the content and the rhythm according to the participants' profile. Going slowly, often repeating things, having regular breaks are necessary, because they are less used to learn and they lose quickly the attention. Participation and hands-on exercises are the keys to a successful initiative.

The main **challenge** identified by the social agents in delivering active ageing and e-inclusion initiatives was the capacity to build a confident relationship with the elderly in order to motivate and engage them increasing their self-confidence in learning about and using ICT. The social agents consider that the main challenges concern the elderly and their interest to participate in this type of initiative. As on one hand the elders are willing to learn about ICT, on the other hand the issues that are concerning them due to their age (e.g. health problems, family problems) are usually limiting them to fully participate in such activities. In order to manage that a large number of elders are able to participate, the social agent should be aware of the elders' needs and make efforts in providing accessibility to the activities and making activities easy to understand using different tools taking also into account that they do not have so much patience. Therefore the activities should contain relaxing and funny activities

The main **success factors** emerged are: listening skills and patience, in order to understand the specific and individual needs. The key factor is the capacity to offer a customised training based on the specific elderly's needs and interests. Flexibility, generosity, capacity to create a collaborative environment and to inform elderly about what are the benefits of digital tools to improve their daily life, also emerged as successful factors in the delivery of such initiatives. The activities should also contain relaxing and funny activities.

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## Appendix: Summary of the initiatives in ACTing project countries

Country	Title of initiative	Short description	Contact
IT/ES	<b>TKV “The Knowledge Volunteers”</b>	Promote digital competence among older people at risk of exclusion through intergenerational exchange and relations with young people. Encourage the active participation of older people in society through voluntary activities, thus enhancing self-esteem, identity and social relations. Create a network of "Knowledge volunteers" of all ages.	Fondazione Mondo Digitale (IT) <a href="http://www.tkv.mondodigitale.org/">http://www.tkv.mondodigitale.org/</a> <a href="mailto:info@mondodigitale.org">info@mondodigitale.org</a>
IT/RO	<b>V.IN.T.AG.E “Valorisation of Innovative Technologies for Aging in Europe”</b>	Proposing innovative solutions to make ICT more accessible and attractive for senior citizens and improve their quality of life and independence.	Associazione Centro Studi Città di Foligno (IT) <a href="http://www.vintageproject.eu">www.vintageproject.eu</a> <a href="mailto:info@vintageproject.eu">info@vintageproject.eu</a>
IT/RO	<b>CARER+ “Developing digital competences of care workers to improve quality of life of older people”</b>	Supporting the development of digital competences and digitally-supported professional skills for care workers, with a particular focus on applying these skills and competences to enhance the quality of care provided for older people.	IPERIA (FR) <a href="http://www.carerplusproject.eu">www.carerplusproject.eu</a> Thomas Arbouet (coordinator) <a href="mailto:thomas.arbouet@iperia.eu">thomas.arbouet@iperia.eu</a>
IT	<b>Granparents on the Internet (Nonni su Internet)</b>	Train the elderly population in the skills necessary to benefit from information and communication technologies (ICT); Renew traditional teaching and learning processes for teachers and students (21st Century Education); Implement social inclusion policies through an approach that involves different parties, such as schools, senior citizens centers, and other organizations that work with the elderly.	Fondazione Mondo Digitale (IT) <a href="http://www.tkv.mondodigitale.org/">http://www.tkv.mondodigitale.org/</a> <a href="mailto:info@mondodigitale.org">info@mondodigitale.org</a>

ES	<b>La abuela es una cuentista</b> <b>(Grandma is a storyteller)</b>	Promote the use of technology and promote the access to ICT tools. The participants (elderly people) recorded their stories on video with a webcam and upload it in Youtube channel created specifically for this initiative. Display and share stories on the Internet.	Aula de Caramanchel Alto. Madrid (ES) <a href="http://youtube.com/abuelascuentistas09">http://youtube.com/abuelascuentistas09</a>
ES	<b>Mi abuelo tiene ordenador portatil - Conecta Joven</b> <b>(Grandpa has a computer)</b>	Reduce the digital gap of elderly people; Promote the intergenerational dialogue between youth and elderly and involve youth people in the community.	Fundacion Esplai (ES) <a href="http://www.conectajoven.net">www.conectajoven.net</a>
RO	<b>Silver Surfer</b>	Seniors acquire the necessary skills and trust themselves to use the computer and surf the internet (to set up an email account, send and receive text emails or attachments, and to discuss with family or friends from the entire world via Skype).	Argo Real Estate Opportunities Fund, (RO)
CH	<b>FFI - Freie Fahrt ins Internet</b> <b>(Free Cruise on the Internet)</b>	Improve elderly's digital skills. The final goal is to make their daily life easier, to allow them to exchange experiences, to share common interests and make new contacts.	Seniorweb (CH) <a href="http://www.seniorweb.ch">www.seniorweb.ch</a>
CH	<b>Cyberthé</b> <b>(Cyber-tea)</b>	Thematic computer workshops for elderly who wish to reinforce or improve their ICTs skills. Their goal is to fight the seniors' digital divide and to increase intergenerational exchanges.	Pro Senectute Arc Jurassien Canton de Neuchâtel (CH) <a href="http://www.seniorweb.ch/fr/type/blog/2012-10-16-les-ateliers-cyberthe-thematiques">www.seniorweb.ch/fr/type/blog/2012-10-16-les-ateliers-cyberthe-thematiques</a> Nadia Lutz: <a href="mailto:nadia.lutz@ne.ch">nadia.lutz@ne.ch</a>
CH	<b>Cité Seniors</b> <b>(City Seniors)</b>	The objective is to bridge the digital divide. The elderly can discover the opportunities of Internet, to acquire and maintain the skills essential to technologies use.	Cité Séniors (Social Cohesion and Solidarity department – City of Geneva) <a href="http://www.villegeneve.ch/themes/social/seniors/cite-seniors/cours-ateliers/sensibilisation-informatique/">www.villegeneve.ch/themes/social/seniors/cite-seniors/cours-ateliers/sensibilisation-informatique/</a> Stéphane Birchmeier (Executive Assistant) <a href="mailto:stephane.birchmeier@ville-ge.ch">stephane.birchmeier@ville-ge.ch</a>