

Participation of vulnerable people in the Information society as a way to empower the target group

DRAFT Concept note

Everyday progress in the field of ICTs is creating positive opportunities to bring public and private sector services closer to citizens and enable them to have more of a say in the way they interact with governments, businesses and decision makers: e-participation solutions can facilitate this interaction. As a result, citizens are increasingly relying on the ICT sector to help them cope in the interconnected world.

However, in 2013 significant numbers of citizens are still short of both access to technology and the skills needed to gain access to the information delivered by information society mechanisms. To allow the inclusive development of our societies, it is crucial to allow the participation of all in the building process of Information Society, and first of all by making the Internet accessible to all.

I. Vulnerable people in the Information Society

It is crucial to increase the participation of vulnerable people¹ in the building process of Information Society and to make their voice heard by stakeholders and policy-makers at different levels.

It can allow the most fragile groups of citizens worldwide to become an integrated part of their economies and also raise the awareness of the target actors on the existing ICTs solutions (such tools as e-participation, e-government, e-learning applications, etc.) designed to make their everyday life better.

Introduction

It is important to initiate a discussion on how Internet governance and innovative approaches in this field could make the Internet more inclusive and participatory taking into account the needs of socially excluded groups, and in particular include into the Building process of Information Society opinions and Initiatives of vulnerable people.

The question of inclusive Internet and of the participation of vulnerable people in the global Information society is more and more crucial, due to the recent events worldwide and various political changes.

1. Different aspects

Information society mechanisms are present in different aspects of every day life of citizens, such as: **Access, Mobile devices, Multilingualism, Online safety, E-government, Open data, Social and economic integration, Participation in the public life, etc.** Particular concerns of vulnerable people in different areas of the Information Society can be addressed by increasing their participation in the

¹ As defined by Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, for more details visit: www.itu.int/wsis

² The UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 (21 December 2001) endorsed the holding of the World Summit

decision-making processes. In this e-participation possibilities will play a crucial role together with the engagement of local communities.

It is also important to share experiences among different stakeholders on how the use of Internet can assist vulnerable people and help them cope with a number of difficulties (literacy, digital divide, Internet access in a number of areas), the dangers and risks (different types of exploitation, online risks and safe Internet, information on their rights and responsibilities, access to information on legal and administrative aspects) in order to fully enjoy their Human Rights and be an integrated part of public life.

One of the most important issues to be discussed is how to facilitate the participation of the mentioned target group in the Information society, to promote the use of ICTs for their better participation in public life and prevent them from becoming victims of illegal activities online.

The promotion of the cybersecurity culture among vulnerable people using the Internet is an important issue to be raised.

They face more difficulties and they are more fragile with regard to Internet dangers, as they don't always have access to information on how to avoid cyber dangers or how to react in the language comprehensible to them.

2. Existing international references

The international community is aware of the need to build more inclusive Information Society and the missing voice of vulnerable communities in it. A number of international references underline this need and recommend developing specific programmes to assist vulnerable people in their participation in democratic public life with the help of ICTs.

2.1. WSIS- World Summit on Information Society ²

² The UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 (21 December 2001) endorsed the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second phase took place in Tunis, from 16 to 18 November 2005.

Geneva Phase: 10-12 December 2003

The objective of the first phase was to develop and foster a clear statement of political will and take concrete steps to establish the foundations for an Information Society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake.

Nearly 50 Heads of state/government and Vice-Presidents, 82 Ministers, and 26 Vice-Ministers from 175 countries, as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, the private sector, and civil society attended the Geneva Phase of WSIS and gave political support to the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action, which were adopted on 12 December 2003.

Tunis Phase: 16-18 November 2005

The objective of the second phase was to put Geneva's Plan of Action into motion as well as to find solutions and reach agreements in the fields of Internet governance, financing mechanisms, and follow-up and implementation of the Geneva and Tunis documents.

Nearly 50 Heads of state/government and Vice-Presidents and 197 Ministers, Vice Ministers and Deputy Ministers from 174 countries as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, private sector, and civil society attended the Tunis Phase of WSIS and gave political support to the Tunis Commitment

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva hosted by the Government of Switzerland from 10 to 12 December 2003, and the second phase took place in Tunis, hosted by the Government of Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005. In the adopted documents during the two phases of WSIS, the need to pay particular attention to vulnerable people is underlined.

Tunis Agenda for the Information Society³, 2005

Ref. to paragraph 90(n) of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society:

"... promoting the use of traditional and new media in order to foster universal access to information, culture and knowledge for all people, especially vulnerable populations and populations in developing countries and using, inter alia, radio and television as educational and learning tools."

Geneva Declaration of Principles⁴, 2003

Ref. to paragraph 13 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles:

"In building the Information Society, we shall pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, including migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people. We shall also recognize the special needs of older persons and persons with disabilities. "

2.2. IGF – Internet Governance Forum⁵

Its purpose is to support the United Nations Secretary-General in carrying out the mandate from the WSIS with regard to convening a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue - the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The site provides an interactive, collaborative space where all stakeholders can share their views and exchange ideas. Its mandate is based on the paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda.

IGF 2012 – Workshop 168⁶

A successful and interactive discussion, covering a big number of issues, took place during this workshop. Panellists, together with the audience, tried to understand how to better involve vulnerable people in the Information society to give them the possibility to become active actors in the field of Internet Governance. The focus of the workshop was on the effect and capacity building needs for better social inclusion of vulnerable people and on how to better assist them in the Information society.

Conclusions and further comments:

During the workshop a consensus was found on:

and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society that were adopted on 18 November 2005.

More information on: <http://www.itu.int/wsis>

³ http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=2267|0

⁴ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html>

⁵ <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/>

⁶ Find the transcripts of the session at: <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2012-igfbaku/w2012/proposals>

1. The need to continue the discussion on the inclusion of vulnerable people in the Information society and on the possibilities for them to become active actors in the field of Internet Governance.
2. The need to identify existing initiatives and best practices in the field of active engagement or programs for better active engagement of vulnerable people in the Information society.
3. The need to build capacity of vulnerable groups and other stakeholders, such as national government representatives, based on the assessment of existing situation and by taking into account regional/national particularities, existing infrastructures and precise definition of the target audience.
4. The need to raise the issue of development of Global Strategy on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Information society, after the identification of its objectives and its potential value for the target group.

IGF 2011 – Workshop 126⁷

A successful and fruitful discussion was developed during the Workshop 126.

The workshop opened with a welcome message and the strong support from Mr Henri Malosse, the President of the EESC⁸.

The discussion focused on different categories of vulnerable people, existing problems and concerns, as well as the ICT solutions and initiatives developed all over the world (from Fiji to UK/France going through Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries). The discussion concerned different groups of vulnerable people (abused children and women, people with social problems and low income, people from regions with transport infrastructure problems and affected (more often than other regions) by natural disasters, victims of ethnic conflicts and those leaving in refugee camps, blind people, migrants and people with migrant background).

It was concluded that in different countries and regions different aspects could contribute to vulnerability of different categories of people. The reasons for vulnerability vary due to national and regional factors.

The participants agreed that ICT and the Internet (all reached the same conclusion intuitively that Internet access is a right) can help different categories of vulnerable people to become an integrated part of society and public life and contribute to their well-being.

Conclusions and further comments:

1. To continue the awareness raising activities of local, national and international communities concerning further implementation of ICTs solutions and initiatives, aimed to create possibilities for all categories of vulnerable people to be an integrated part of public life.
2. To increase the interest in the subject of ICTs for better assistance for vulnerable people among all stakeholders and within the IGF communities. Continue the discussions and development of concrete solutions to the above-mentioned issues.
3. To stimulate discussions and consultations concerning the need for development of legal solutions/possible legal framework for better assistance and legal protection of vulnerable people. To develop capacity building Initiatives.
4. As the first step in implementing the agreed solutions, the development of a global network was proposed.

⁷ Find the transcripts of the session at: <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/content/article/108-transcripts/830-28-september-2011-ad-workshop-126-internet-for-democratic-participation-of-vulnerable-people-in-publiclife-best-practices-exchange>

⁸ To learn more visit : <http://www.eesc.europa.eu>

IGF 2010 – Workshop 109⁹

The main points of the discussion were focused on how ICTs can assist and help people with migrant background during the integration process into the new society (using ICT they could accede information more easily and faster) and facilitate social cohesion, as well as give vulnerable people the possibility of accession to the citizenship of residence (citoyenneté de résidence) and positively take advantage of it.

At the same time we have to pay attention to the privacy questions and the protection of personal data. One of the positive aspects is that ICTs could contribute to stop different types of exploitation of people with migrant background.

Conclusions and further comments:

1. We need to continue discussions concerning the "Use of ICT by people with migrant background" and propose concrete actions in cooperation with different actors (private sector, International organizations, civil society and public sector).
2. The voice of people with migrant background has to be heard and integrated into the Building process of Information Society.
3. There must be a proposal for a specific approach to the promotion of cybersecurity culture taking into consideration the fragility of vulnerable populations and people with migrant background.
4. We call on the Council of Europe as a Human Rights organization, to support the development of tools and guidelines of best practices on *the Use of ICT by people with migrant background* for a better social cohesion and the increase of higher chances for success of the people with migrant background in their host countries.

2.3. European context

The European community supports the mentioned international standards and makes the participation of vulnerable people in public life with the help of ICTs one of the priorities of its policies.

Council of Europe¹⁰

The Council of Europe provides the secretariat of the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG)¹¹ in cooperation with European Union institutions and other organisations. EuroDIG is a platform for discussing and shaping a European perspective on Internet governance.

Already in 2011, EuroDIG defined the participation of vulnerable people in the Information society as one of the priorities of the European community.

One of the priorities of the Council of Europe is "... the need for programmes to assist vulnerable and marginalised groups. (...)", as it was stated¹² during the Opening ceremony by the Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Mrs Maud de Boer-Buquicchio.

⁹ Find the transcripts of the session at: <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/content/article/108-transcripts/830-28-september-2011-ad-workshop-126-internet-for-democratic-participation-of-vulnerable-people-in-publiclife-best-practices-exchange>

¹⁰ To learn more about the Council of Europe please visit : www.coe.int

¹¹ To learn more about the Council of Europe please visit : www.eurodig.org

¹² The full opening speech can be found at: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=DC-PR022\(2011\)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FD C864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=DC-PR022(2011)&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FD C864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)

Government of Portugal

The Government of Portugal has more than 15 years of experience of integrating vulnerable people in the public life with the help of ICTs¹³. In January 2013, the Government of Portugal joined the Working Group on Vulnerable people and ICTs¹⁴, which was created as an outcome of the IGF 2012 Workshop 169 to bring its experience and share best practices with other members of the international community.

For the edition of EuroDIG 2013, which took place in June 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science of Portugal prepared the publication on *Vulnerable people and ICT's – The practice of more than 15 years*¹⁵. This underlines the importance that the Government of Portugal gives to the role of vulnerable people and their voice in the Information society, as well as e-participation solutions as a way for their better integration.

II. First Outcomes

1. People with migrant background

The Internet could be a catalyst for change; it is also a perfect tool that allows people with a migrant background to learn more about their citizenship and the citizenship of residence. These people represent a fragile group due to their particular vulnerability. Using ICTs and the Internet they can then more easily participate in public life at different levels. Internet can grant them the possibility and the motivation to fully discover and enjoy their rights of citizens. Accordingly the Internet can be a catalyst for change that will include and motivate active citizenship and the participation of all in the Building Process of Information Society.

eSPRINT project¹⁶

eSPRINT – ICT as a tool of better integration of migrants in European Union countries: for better mutual understanding and wider dissemination of EU values

Short project description

This EU funded project is a follow-up of workshop n° 109 “Use of ICT by people with migrant background”, held during the Internet Governance Forum in Vilnius in September 2010.

As a result of this workshop it was decided to continue the debate on ICTs use by people with migrant background and to propose concrete solutions. In order to implement these solutions, a European multistakeholder network was created, the activity of which led to the creation of **Introductory online capacity building course for local authorities representatives on the use of ICTs for better integration of migrants and people with migrant background in the local public life**¹⁷. Particular attention was paid to the local dimension and importance of cooperation between local communities and local authorities.

¹³ For more information: <http://www.fct.pt/dsi/noticias.phtml.en>

¹⁴ For more information: <http://www.vulnerables.eu/workinggroup.html>

¹⁵ Full publication available at: http://www.fct.pt/dsi/docs/fct_vulnerablepeople_ict.pdf

¹⁶ For more information visit: www.e-sprint.eu

¹⁷ Available at: <http://www.vulnerables.eu/elearn/>

The European debate was stimulated during this project by associating different actors from civil society, people with a migrant background and their representatives – from private as well as from public sector. The following were the three most important topics of the meetings organised at a local level with multistakeholder communities in all EU partner countries:

- ICTs - i.e. experience, use, reflections on, potential development and use of - for a better social integration of migrants at European level
- ICTs and legal aspects of their use
- ICTs for the promotion of the intercultural dialogue

Impact of the methodology of the project

1. By having associated citizens (including migrants) and actors from different sectors in discussion on the use of ICTs in the policies concerning migrants' integration (through the organization of debates at a local level), migrants were given directly the opportunity to take part in the process of building of common Europe. This open discussion contributed to the improvement of social cohesion, allowed interaction between different social groups, contributed to the development of common European citizenship and also raised citizens' awareness of their responsibilities, turning them into active participants of the democratic structure of European society (informal learning of the active citizenship approach).

2. The interaction between different citizens' groups and the possibility for those who were unable physically to attend the conference to participate remotely - including other European countries - partners of the project – allowed to develop indirectly the awareness of common values as well as the understanding of common problems, specific to human beings.

3. An open discussion allowed involving migrants in local life. The opportunity to share ideas and interact with European counterparts and the possibility of being heard contributed to the feeling of being at the heart of Europe, of being a part of it.

4. Tolerance and understanding were the outcome of interaction and recognition of common problems and values. An open discussion with different associated actors coming from different European countries facilitated mutual understanding via the exchange of ideas and points of view, always respecting and taking into consideration those of the others (promotion of European values).

The intercultural dialogue is here the most important aspect of the action: dialogue between citizens of a country, migrants and other associated actors, as well as between them and their European counterparts.

Achieved results

The main outcome of the present project, based on multistakeholder consultations in more than 8 European countries, is the developed **Introductory Course for local authorities representatives on the use of ICTs for better integration of migrants and people with migrant background in the European Union countries.**

Local authorities representatives play a crucial role in the implementation of local policies and local democracy processes that allow including citizens in local public life and pay particular attention to the most vulnerable of them, in our case migrants and people with migrant background.

Having in mind the role of local dimension and the importance of being included in local public life, e-participation possibilities for all are becoming a more and more evident tool of local democracy processes. The importance of taking advantages offered by the Information Society for better inclusion of migrants in local public life was underlined by all stakeholders of local meetings organised under eSPRINT project.

The use of ICTs in local democracy policies depends on local authorities and their capacities to innovate. The empowerment of local authorities representatives is crucial for the efficiency of integration and participation of all in local public life. That is why the need of the capacity building program on the use of ICTs in different areas for better integration of migrants and people with migrant background became evident for partners of the project.

This program aims to give a global overview to local authorities representatives and staff members on the issue of the use of ICTs for better integration of migrants and people with migrant background at local level.

Its objective is to empower local authorities representatives and staff members with the information on different aspects of the complex subject of the use of ICTs for better integration of migrants and people with migrant background.

The global overview and the general understating of the proposed aspects are important for the development and the successful implementation of The Global Strategy on the use of ICTs for better integration of migrants at local level.

The program is the online course based on needs and experiences expressed by all stakeholders during the local meetings and organised in 5 chapters, namely: Understand the issue, Legal aspects & rights, ICTs for education and learning, Labour Market, Social capital. These chapters have the objective to show by using different existing best practices how the ICTs can facilitate the participation of migrants in different areas and allow them to have a say in this areas and thus in local public life, which will contribute to the eradication of poverty and increase social and economic potential of the target group.

The course is available in English and contains videos, pictures and animations; the evaluation test is a part of the course and the certificate of attendance is delivered at the end of the course after the evaluation test is completed successfully.

2. Working Group Vulnerable people and ICTs¹⁸

During the Workshop 168 (IGF 2012)¹⁹ panellists together with the audience tried to understand how to better involve vulnerable people in the Information society to give them the possibility to become active actors in the field of Internet Governance.

The focus of the workshop was on the effect and capacity building needs for better social inclusion of vulnerable people and on how to better assist them in the Information society.

As a result of a successful and interactive discussion, covering a big number of issues, it was proposed to create a Working Group on the issue of better inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Information society.

¹⁸ For more details please visit : <http://www.vulnerables.eu/workinggroup.html>

¹⁹ For more details please visit: <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2012-igfbaku/w2012/proposals>

The objective of the Group

Better inclusion of vulnerable people in the building process of the information Society and participation in its decision-making processes to ensure equal participation of all in sustainable economic, social and human development is the main objective of the present work.

This can be achieved only by creating possibilities for disadvantaged people to actively participate in social and economic life and to communicate in the language they are accustomed to.

The work of the Group focuses on:

1. The identification of existing initiatives and best practices or programs in the field of active engagement of vulnerable people in the Information society.
2. The development of a specific approach for better online protection of vulnerable people.
3. The creation of capacity building activities for vulnerable groups and other stakeholders, such as national government representatives, based on the assessment of existing situation and taking into account regional/national particularities, existing infrastructures and precise definition of the target audience.
4. The need to raise the issue of development of Global Strategy on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Information Society, after the identification of its objectives and its potential value for our target group

Conclusions and recommendations²⁰

We need:

1. To continue awareness raising activities on the issue and develop a Global Fora for discussion in the multistakeholder format;
2. To underline the need for Framework and policies on the Inclusion of vulnerable, marginalized communities, people with disabilities (taking into account differences of handicaps) in the Information society;
3. To develop Global Strategy on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Information society;
4. To continue developing technical solutions by engaging with private sector. To continue the work on accessible infrastructure by creating support to libraries;
5. To ensure the priorities of Universal Design are applied;
6. To recommend to the ICANN and communities working on the new gTLDs program, to develop particular projects for vulnerable communities to create new opportunities for this target group;

²⁰ Based on the outcomes of the Workshop 7 at EuroDIG 2013, for more information : <http://www.eurodig.org/eurodig-2013/programme/workshops/workshop-7>

7. To adapt and continue working on e-participation, e-educational solutions and media literacy methodologies to deliver access to content and capacity building tools, and also e-governmental solutions;
8. To focus on the needs of local communities by engaging local communities in the implementation of legal Framework actions and policies;
9. To present the issue of digital inclusion and e-participation in business friendly language;
10. To underline the need for National Strategies on digital inclusion to be implemented in close cooperation and engagement with local authorities.

These recommendations can be implemented by:

Involving all stakeholders
Developing a Global framework
Speaking to each other
Taking care of each other
Being proud of what we are doing.

About the author

Today, Yuliya leads a non-for-profit organisation TaC-Together against Cybercrime Int., which works on empowerment of users in the field of safe and responsible Internet, child online protection and the Internet Governance issues.

Yuliya is an expert of a number of international organisations on cybercrime and cybersecurity and author or co-author of a number of regulatory texts in different countries. She advises governments and private sector entities on cybersecurity strategies.

Yuliya co-initiated such projects as: Youth IGF, Working group on better participation of vulnerable groups in the Information Society or the Empowerment of vulnerable children online. Yuliya is a MAG member of IGF.

She is an Associate professor at Strasbourg University and Co-coordinator of the Research team at the Faculty of Social Sciences working on the Use of ICTs by Youth from difficult areas. Yuliya is a former Deputy Head of the Unit on Cybercrime at the Council of Europe.

She is Graduate from the Institute of Political Sciences of Paris and also holds a Master degree in European Affairs and the L.L.M. on Internet Law.