



ECDL Malta

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills are Integral to the Aims of the European Year of Active Ageing

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The European Commission's Goals of Ensuring that Older Europeans Can Participate Fully in Society and Remain Contributing to the Economy Will Significantly Depend on Their Improved ICT Skills

The European Commission has designated 2012 as the 'European Year of Active Ageing' in an initiative that intends to enhance the quality of life of people as they age and to ensure their continued participation in the labour force. Europe's population is ageing and as more people reach retirement, public services are struggling to cope.

A recent report emphasizes that members of so called 'baby-boom' generation are now reaching their sixties and are beginning to retire from the labour market, which marks a turning point in the demographic development of the European Union¹.

The social intention of the concept of active ageing is to "...allow people to realise their potential for wellbeing throughout their lives and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capabilities, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need assistance²." ICT skills are critical to the aims of older people being able to participate fully in society in accordance with their needs and desires. Understandably, the recent and rapid evolutions in technology and the Internet have left older members of society at more risk from social exclusion, and as more and more communication, and essential goods and services migrate online – including government services – the risk of social exclusion is likely to increase.

The demographic change arising from an ageing population also poses considerable economic challenges for EU and Member State policymakers. According to the European Commission:

"The (European Year of Active Ageing) initiative aims to help create better job opportunities and working conditions for the growing numbers of older people in Europe...as Europe's policymakers grapple with a steadily ageing population and its impacts on public services and finances."

It is vital for Europe's economic fortunes that workers remain in the labour force for longer; forecasts predict that even by 2020, 7 million new jobs will be created in Europe³, yet Europe's population and labour force is shrinking. It is also anticipated that these new jobs will become more skills and knowledge intensive than in previous times. The concept of active ageing incorporates the idea of older people being able to actively contribute to the economy. To be able to do this, they will need to be equipped with the ICT skills to fill increasingly skilled job roles, and to contribute to Europe's prosperity through their ability to purchase goods and services online.

ECDL Foundation, as a leading advocate for digital literacy in Europe, fully supports the multiple aims of the European Year of Active Ageing initiative and emphasises the importance of ICT skills in combatting the digital exclusion of the elderly.

In Malta, ECDL Malta is responsible for operating ECDL certification programmes on behalf of the ECDL Foundation which is the certifying authority of the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme.

For more information about the ECDL programmes view our website www.ecdl.com.mt. ECDL Malta may be contacted via e-mail on info@ecdl.com.mt or phone number 21667706.

¹Demography report 2010 - Older, more numerous and diverse Europeans': Eurostat 01/04/2

² European Commission: 6.9.2010 SEC(2010) 1002 final

³ See Cedefop Briefing Note, Feb 2010: "Jobs in Europe to become more knowledge- and skills intensive"