



---

# MC-eGov Study on Multi-channel Delivery Strategies and Sustainable Business Models for Public Services addressing Socially Disadvantaged Groups

Contract 30-CE-0161843/00-50  
(January 2008 to February 2009)

**Internet Tea Room for the Elderly (Slovakia)**

**Prepared by: Tomas Sabol**

**September 2008**

ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd  
Priestley House  
12-26 Albert Street  
Birmingham B4 7UD  
UK

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Meeting and interview schedule	1
1.2	Structure of this report	2
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background information on situation in slovakia</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	The Policy Context - Ageing population	3
2.2	Critically Review the organisational structure and policies for social services	3
2.3	Identifying the needs, the social situation and employment of the elderly	5
2.4	ICT Channels in Slovakia	7
2.5	Online delivery of public services	9
2.6	eAccessibility of public Web sites in Slovakia	9
2.7	Summary – the Channel Context	10
<b>3.0</b>	<b>The Organisation “Senior Dom”</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1	Mission and vision of the organisation “Senior Dom”	11
3.2	Work with Intermediaries to build services of value - Services provided by the Senior Dom	12
3.3	Identification of needs	13
<b>4.0</b>	<b>OUTCOMES and sustainability</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1	Outcomes achieved	15
4.2	Assessing and measuring outcomes	15
4.3	Sustainability	15
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document presents information on a case study analysis conducted in Slovakia during June-September 2008 as a part of the Mc-eGov study, being conducted by ECOTEC Research & Consulting on behalf of the DG Information Society and Media.

The case study “**Internet Tea Room for the Elderly in Slovakia**” targets the age group 65+, presenting a successful example of an initiative aimed at improving ICT skills of the elderly (while creating a learning environment consisting of like-minded people and thus reducing their cognitive and psychological barriers) and improving access to the Internet.

The case study in particular demonstrates the challenges in service delivery through appropriate channels for a growing segment of Slovakian society that had limited exposure to ICTs and related communication technologies, and which in recent years has started to place increasing service demands on social services and health at a time when there are considerable pressures on Government finances. Furthermore, the landscape of Third Sector intermediaries better developed than in other post-communist countries such as Lithuania, and as a result there is potential capacity in Third Sector organisations to help build targeted interventions for elderly people.

Initiatives such as the “Internet Tea Room” therefore help to build skills and knowledge in the target groups, encourage collaborative initiatives between local stakeholders which both increase capacity, and also help to identify the needs of the elderly better and link them more effectively to service portfolios that are accessed through delivery channels that matter to elderly people.

The analysis of the case study was conducted by Tomas Sabol, professor at the Technical University of Kosice, Faculty of Economics (and his colleagues Dr. Maria Geralska and assoc. prof. Radoslav Delina, PhD) contracted by ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.

This case study was selected to be explored and analysed for the Mc-eGov study due to its focus on a group of the elderly in a targeted way. In Slovakia, but probably also in other post-communist countries the elderly have usually been perceived as passive receivers of social help, and in a very limited way involved in Information Society services, including low usage of the Internet. This case study draws a different picture - community project, initiated by an “emergent elderly leader” activating also other elderly, leading thus to an increased usage of the Internet and, what is most important, improved social inclusion and quality of their lives.

### 1.1 *Meeting and interview schedule*

The following people provided inputs to the case study:

- Ms. Olga Rodzinakova, interview on 12 June 2008, plus two informal discussions and written inputs (emails) in June - July 2008
- Dr Hovancová Alica, written input, June 2008.
- Eva Reitznerová, written input, June 2008.

## **1.2 Structure of this report**

The structure of the report is as follows:

- Background information – *general situation of the elderly in Slovakia, provision of social services (main actors, legislation), development of Information society and eGovernment services; eAccessibility of public Web sites;*
- Information on the organisation, which is subject of this case study (Senior Dom) – *mission of the organisation, services provided, identification of needs (how this initiative is identifying and meeting the needs of the elderly);*
- Outcomes – *what outcomes have been achieved, how they can be measured, success factors, issues of sustainability;*
- Conclusion

## 2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

This chapter provides the background information on the situation of the elderly and development of Information society and eGovernment in Slovakia.

### 2.1 The Policy Context - Ageing population

Similarly as in other EU countries, the population of Slovakia is ageing, the absolute number of the elderly as well as the ratio of 65+ to the adult population (18-64) are increasing – see Table 1.

**Table 1.** Number of citizens in the age group 65+ versus the age group 18-64.

Year	Number of inhabitants				65+ / 18-64
	65+	Δ(year-2008)	18-64	Δ(year-2008)	
2008	670 946	0	3 682 578	0	5,49
2016	818 232	+147 285	3 650 190	-32 388	4,46
2024	1 040 469	+369 523	3 428 944	-253 634	3,30
2032	1 175 162	+504 216	3 278 684	-403 894	2,79
2040	1 285 931	+614 985	3 065 937	-616 641	2,38

Source: Infostat, <http://www.infostat.sk>

The same applies also to Kosice city, where the NGO “Senior Dom” is based. According to the report<sup>1</sup> submitted to the Municipal parliament of Kosice city, the process of ageing of the population will accelerate in the next decades for two main reasons: a) decrease of the number of births, and b) increasing life expectancy. For this reason it is necessary, according to the report, to develop new social services for the elderly on the city level, since the currently delivered services for the elderly are insufficient not only from the quantitative, but also qualitative point of view (including demands for new types of services).

### 2.2 Critically Review the organisational structure and policies for social services

Social affairs are an important agenda of public administration in Slovakia on all the levels, i.e. state administration (national level) as well as self-government (with “delegated” responsibilities for social affairs, healthcare, education etc.). There are two types of self-governments – regional government (self-governing regions) and municipal self-governments (towns and villages). Large cities are divided into several city wards (e.g. Kosice city is divided into 22 city wards), which means that in cities there are municipal self-governments on city wards level and on city level as well.

Social and healthcare services are provided by several institutions on different levels of public administration, in an organisational landscape that is strongly silo-based, for example:

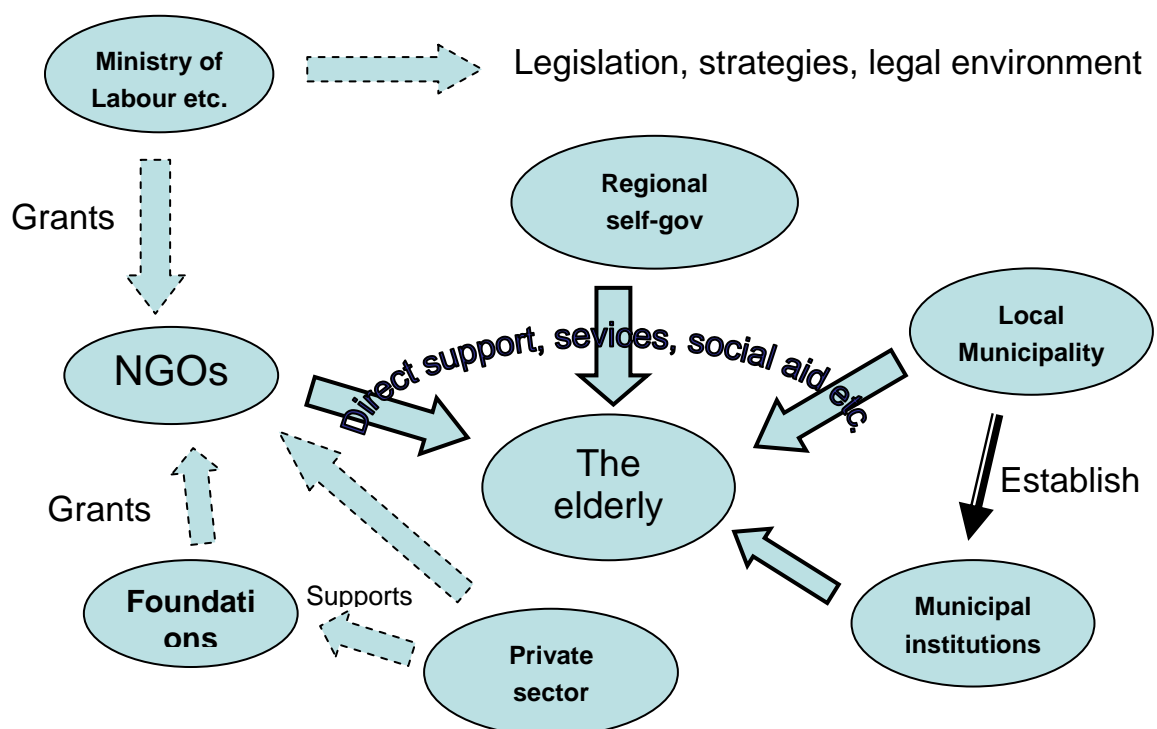
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family<sup>2</sup>
  - Social and family policies, social inclusion, social services, integration of the disabled, social protection of children and family etc.
- Headquarters of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (state administration) - offices in all counties

Návrh rozvoja sociálnych služieb pre seniorov mesta Košice na obdobie rokov 2005 - 2007

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.employment.gov.sk/new/index.php?SMC=1&lang=en>

- Social affairs, state social aid, social and legal protection of children, the disabled, advisory and psychological services
- Self-governing regions
  - Social affairs, coordination of provision of social aid (social prevention, social counselling, social and legal protection, social services) etc.
- Municipality (for cities)
  - Social affairs, social housing
- City wards
  - Social affairs

As can be seen from the list above, most of the delivered services are related to financial aid, social and legal protection, social and healthcare services.



**Fig. 1** A network of organisations involved (in a direct or indirect way) in social affairs and provision of social services to the elderly.

The related policy landscape is largely determined by the legislation that allows things to happen. A network of main actors involved in an indirect or direct way in the provision of social services and social affairs is depicted (in a simplified manner) in Fig. 1. For example, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is responsible for setting up a legislative frameworks, initiates programmes, national initiatives, bills (submitted then for approval to the National parliament or government), provides grants to NGOs etc. The Ministry closely cooperates with other organisations of the state administration, especially Regional and County Offices. The most relevant acts to social affairs are Act No. 195/1998 Code “On Social Help”, and Act No. 461/2003

Code “On Social Insurance”. The “National Programme of Protection of the Elderly”<sup>3</sup> defines national strategy in this area. There is also a proposal to set up a “Government Council for Senior People” and a “Government Council for the Disabled” (this one previously existed under a different name). The Government Council for Senior People should be an advisory body to the government, acting also as a coordinator of activities, initiator of legislative changes, analyses, studies etc.

The result of the focus on organisational silos, and legislative permissions to undertake specific tasks and actions, means that no special strategy for eInclusion, inclusive eGovernment, multi-channel delivery of services was developed so far in Slovakia. The National Report on Strategy of Social Protection and Social Inclusion for Years 2008-2010<sup>4</sup> contains just general statements on disadvantaged groups and their access to Information Society/eGovernment services, issues of eInclusion, WAI criteria etc. No specific measures (e.g. for the elderly) are mentioned.

Self-governments can also issue legislative measures, so-called Generally Binding Regulations (approved by Regional/Municipal parliaments). Municipalities can also establish, manage, co-fund, and control facilities of social services, for example a Retirement house for old age pensioners, Facility of social services, Canteen and Club of old age pensioners. Social services are provided also by non-state organizations, such as Third Sector NGOs. These can get some financial support for their activities from the state (Ministry), foundations, but also companies and individual citizens. Since according to the Tax Act every citizen and company can donate 2% of his/her income/corporate tax to a registered NGO, some large companies established their own foundations, and some of them fund also projects related to social exclusion for specific target groups.

In addition to the departments of social affairs within public administration organisations at different levels, local/municipal/regional/national parliaments can establish various committees consisting of elected representatives and invited experts, which are also dealing with social affairs.

### **2.3 Identifying the needs, the social situation and employment of the elderly**

Policy of the Slovak government towards the elderly is presented in the National Programme for Protection of the Elderly<sup>5</sup> (“*Národný program ochrany starších ľudí - NPOSL*”). “Protection” of the elderly within social policy is aimed at achievement of conditions of independent living, social participation and integration of the elderly into society. This should be achieved via proper social, health and housing services and policies, educational policies, but also financial and employment policies.

Demographic challenges related to the ageing of the population imply the need to increase the participation of the elderly in the labour market. In spite of the recent moderate increase, the rate of employment of the elderly (age group 55-64) is still very low – see Table 2. In 2006 Slovakia had the second lowest employment rate of the elderly within EU, it is especially low for females (18.9% in 2006).

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.employment.gov.sk/new/index.php?SMC=1>

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_inclusion/docs/2006/nap/slovakia\\_sk.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2006/nap/slovakia_sk.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.employment.gov.sk/new/index.php?SMC=1>

**Table 2.** Rate of employment of the elderly (2006).

	Male	Female	Total
Rate of employment 15-64	67.0	51.9	59.4
Rate of employment 55-64	49.9	19.0	33.2
Rate of unemployment 15+	12.2	14.7	13.3
Rate of unemployment 55-64	9.9	9.4	9.8

Source: Office of statistics, Slovakia

The rate of poverty risk is also a potential danger (poverty and social exclusion are closely interrelated), e.g. in 2005 for the age category 65+ this risk slightly increased from 7.1% in 2004 to 8.5% in 2005. The lowest percentage of citizens endangered by the poverty risk is within the age category 50-64 (7.7%) and males 65+ (4.5%). At the same time the most significant difference between males and females is in the age category 65+ (4.5% versus 10.8%). This difference is probably caused by on average lower pensions of females (since life expectancy of females is higher than males, there is higher percentage of females living alone in household). The poverty risk of females after retirement and with the increasing age (especially after 65) is increasing (in contrast to males) what can also lead to the feminization of poverty.

Surveys carried out among the elderly (see Table 3) demonstrate that their major concerns are related to health, financial problems (low income) and “bad situation” in society in general (including bad relations among people). It should be noted that the results of this survey could be influenced by the impact of economic transformation taking place in Slovakia at that time.

**Table 3.** Concerns of the elderly.

Type of concern	Male	Female	Total
Health problems	22.4	28.5	25.9
Financial problems	23.7	22.1	22.6
Health & financial problems	6.1	14.5	11.3
Lack of security, loneliness	11.8	8.7	9.9
Bad governance, bad situation	25.9	14.2	19.0
No problems	2.2	2.0	2.1
Did not respond	7.9	9.9	9.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Survey of socio-economic situation of the elderly, 2004

This short overview of the situation in Slovakia indicates that especially females in the age category 65+ are in danger of social inclusion and deserve special attention.

Another dimension of the problem is illustrated by Table 4 – (average) income of the elderly versus prices for basic ICT (PC, Internet access, mobile phone). It clearly shows that for an average elderly (living alone) ICT is a type of luxury he/she can hardly afford.

**Table 4.** Average income of the elderly versus prices for ICT

Item	EUR / SKK
<b>Income:</b>	
Average pension (February 29, 2008)	278 EUR (8 907 SK)

Living wages	160 EUR (5 130 SK)
<b>Expenses:</b>	
PC (average with OS and MS Office)	750 EUR
Internet access (average quality)	16 – 47 EUR
Mobile (average)	9 – 13 EUR

Note: Prices of all the items are per month, except the price of PC.

*Source: Social Insurance company; Orange, own market analysis, 2008*

## 2.4 ICT Channels in Slovakia

According to i2010 Annual Report 2007<sup>6</sup> household take-up of broadband and overall Internet connectivity in Slovakia are among the lowest in Europe. Growth in broadband has tripled from a very low starting point but there has been little increase in overall number of Internet users. Usage levels are higher than the connectivity would imply, and not far from the EU average. Reading news and magazines online is particularly popular.

This can partly be explained with the high frequency of Internet use outside homes – at work, schools, and Public Internet Access. The low broadband penetration does not permit the development of a commercial market for online content. eGovernment services are not yet widely available but citizens and enterprises use of basic services is above average and close to average for advanced services. Enterprise service use has grown especially fast. Availability of broadband and computers in schools are low but teachers use computers for teaching more than availability would imply.

ICT skill levels among employees are unequal: for expert skills, Slovakia is above average whereas basic user skill levels are among the lowest in Europe. Connectivity among enterprises is slightly better than in households but at the low end of the EU scale. The development of the Information Society is one of the policy priorities of Slovakia, but it is still rather in the phase of political proclamations than real implementation.

Internet usage in Slovakia is illustrated by figures in Tables 5-8. As can be seen from these tables:

- Internet access as well as broadband penetration is increasing, although it is still below EU average – see Table 5;
- About 50% of 14+ population is not using Internet, in spite of the fact that about 6% has access, but still does not use it (it may be presumed that most of them are elderly and less educated people) – see Table 6;
- Internet usage of the age category 55-74 is significantly below EU27 average (about 50%) and much lower than in the top EU countries (Denmark, UK, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Luxembourg) – see Table 7;
- Within the country internet usage of the age category 55-74 is much lower than of the age category 25-54, for males it is 1 : 4 and for females even 1 : 6 – see Table 7;
- The number of internet users significantly decreases for the elderly – see the numbers of regular and non-regular users for the age categories 60+ and 55-59 in Table 7;
- Interesting is also high percentage of those who have access to Internet, but still do not use it – even for the age category 35-44, with the peak for the category 45-54 – see Table 8;

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=3303](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3303)

- Percentage of those who do not have access to the Internet increases with the age, financial reasons can play quite a significant role especially for 60+ - see Table 8.

**Table 5.** Internet access and broadband

Country	Internet access		Broadband	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
SK	27	46	11	27
CZ	29	35	17	28
DK	79	78	63	70
ES	39	45	29	39
UK	63	67	44	57
EU27	63	67	44	57

Source: *Internet usage in 2007. Households and individuals, Eurostat, 2007*

**Table 6:** Internet usage (August 2007)

	% of 14+
Internet usage – regularly	27,8
Internet usage – non-regularly	22,8
Has access to Internet, but does not use it	6,4
Does not have access to Internet, does not use it	42,6

Source: IVO, Slovakia, <http://www.ivo.sk>

**Table 7:** Individuals using Internet at least once a week

Country	Male		Female	
	25-54	55-74	25-54	55-74
SK	56	14	59	10
CZ	49	21	44	11
DK	87	58	84	47
ES	54	17	46	9
UK	76	50	68	33
EU27	61	31	55	19

Source: *Internet usage in 2007. Households and individuals, Eurostat, 2007*

**Table 8:** Internet usage (at least once a week) by different age categories, Slovakia

Age	Internet usage			
	Using regularly	Using non-regularly	Has access, but does not use it	Does not have access, does not use
14 – 17	46,2	34,1	1,1	18,7
18 – 24	43,8	36,1	3,0	17,2
25 – 34	39,7	27,9	1,5	29,9
35 – 44	27,4	27,9	8,5	35,8
45 – 54	23,3	14,5	12,4	49,2
55 – 59	17,7	17,7	9,7	53,2
60+	2,4	5,8	8,2	83,1

Source: IVO, <http://www.ivo.sk>, august 2007

## **2.5 Online delivery of public services**

The Capgemini report “The User Challenge Benchmarking. The Supply of Online Public Services”<sup>7</sup> 2007 presents the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual measurement of the progress of online public service delivery across Europe. It features results from the two core measurements of sophistication and fully-online availability of online services, measured across a basket of 20 services assessed from public agencies across 31 countries – the 27 EU Member States, plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey (EU27+). The report in 2007 also piloted a composite indicator for User-Centricity and it has assessed national portals as a trusted comprehensive one-stop access to public services.

Slovakia scored 35% for fully-online availability. This shows a substantial improvement of 15% compared to 2006. 63% of business services are fully transactional, however only 17% are fully-online for citizens – this shows that the gap between the citizen and business service sophistication is substantial. The online sophistication of Slovakian public services scores 57%. In general, Slovakia remains in the lower quartile of EU27+. The pro-active user centric development of services is poor: none of the services attains a pro-active level. Concerning user centricity, Slovakia scores with 8% far below the EU27+ average of 19%. On the other hand, the assessment of the national portal<sup>8</sup> shows good results: already half of the public services can be accessed through the portal and the usability and personalisation of the site is well developed.

Results of this benchmarking study also clearly show that Slovakia is quite significantly falling behind the EU average in delivery of online public services – according to the both measurement rankings: sophistication as well as online availability (although in this indicator the situation has improved in comparison with the past) Slovakia is in the group of last 4-5 countries. Another negative aspect, from the point of view of the elderly, is that services for citizens are much less developed than for businesses.

## **2.6 eAccessibility of public Web sites in Slovakia**

Situation in eAccessibility of public web sites is relevant especially for the elderly with visual, hearing, and cognitive impairments. The Slovak Blind and Partially Blind Sighted Union did a study on “eAccessibility of web sites in public and private sector”<sup>9</sup> in January – December 2007.

The study evaluated 200 web sites from:

- a) Public sector - 98 web sites consisting of:
  - Central and other organisations of the State Administration (41)
  - Ministries (14)
  - State admin - other (24)
  - Self-government (31)
  - Self-governing regions (8)
  - Towns and villages (23)
- b) Educational sector
- c) Private sector

---

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/benchmarking/egov\\_benchmark\\_2007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/benchmarking/egov_benchmark_2007.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.portal.gov.sk/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.blindfriendly.sk/file/zaverecna-sprava-dielo-pristupnost-2007.pdf>

Testing was done by a combination of automatic (using SW) and manual testing. Focus was put on the priority 1, checkpoint 1.1 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0, which is critical - if the web site does not fulfil check point 1.1, for many disadvantaged it is practically not accessible.

Out of 200 tested web sites 81 (34%) did not fulfil check point 1.1 in a significant way and 51 of them (40%) did not fulfil 1.1 in some aspects!

Results of testing of public sector web sites were as follows:

- 1) Central organisations of State administration (i.e. Ministries and other organisations of SA):
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in a significant way: 14 (31%)
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in some aspects: 19 (46%)
  - Number of web sites fulfilling checkpoint 1.1: 8 (20%)
- 2) Self-government:
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in a significant way: 11 (35%)
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in some aspects: 12 (39%)
  - Number of web sites fulfilling checkpoint 1.1: 8 (26%)
- 3) Other organisations of public administration:
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in a significant way: 7 (27%)
  - Number of web sites not fulfilling checkpoint 1.1 in some aspects: 7 (27%)
  - Number of web sites fulfilling checkpoint 1.1: 12 (46%)

These numbers clearly show that situation in eAccessibility in Slovakia is far from satisfactory, which makes it difficult for the elderly with visual, hearing, cognitive and other types of impairments to access public web sites (unfortunately the same applies also to web sites of the private sector) and thus may contribute to the increase (rather than decrease) of their social exclusion.

## **2.7 Summary – the Channel Context**

Summing up briefly the situation in the Information society development in Slovakia, it can be said that recently the situation is gradually improving, although still falling behind the EU average in majority of the indicators/benchmarks. Participation in the Information society and the Internet usage is decreasing with the age, especially for the age 60+, and involvement of females is lower than males (which is however true also for other countries). Therefore there is an urgency to find strategies that link the increasing availability of online services to a segment of society that is in danger of becoming relatively technologically marginalised. Furthermore, since there is a policy goal to increase the economic participation of the elderly, it is also important to stimulate their life-long learning capacity as well as to deliver services to them in an effective and efficient manner.

### 3.0 THE ORGANISATION “SENIOR DOM”

Motto of the “Senior dom”: *Behave to your parents in the same way as you expect from your children to behave to you*

#### 3.1 Mission and vision of the organisation “Senior Dom”



The “Senior Dom”<sup>10</sup> (Seniors’ House) is a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Kosice (Eastern Slovakia), established in 2001.

Target groups of this NGO are: a) the elderly before retirement (preparation for the retirement), and b) the elderly 60+. According to its statute the Senior Dom serves the population of the elderly in Slovakia in the area of social affairs, health care and housing. All its activities are related to improvement of mental, intellectual, health, physical and cultural life of the elderly and facilitation of life style change after retirement. The Senior Dom declares itself as a community where people, after finishing active work period in their life, are getting involved in educational, cultural and social activities. Vision of the Senior Dom is to create a seed of movement and activities, which will change the attitude of the society to the generation of the elderly and improve the quality of life of the elderly by “cultivating” their intellectual and physical capabilities and increasing their social integration (creating new interpersonal relations etc.).

#### **Identify, train, and support Intermediaries - Leader of the elderly community in Kosice**

The “Senior Dom” was initiated, established and still managed by an elderly lady in her mid 70’s. Ms. Olga Rodzinakova retired from the University in Kosice (being assistant professor, holding PhD degree) when she was 60+. She was active in local politics as a member of the city parliament, so she has some experience also in politics.

Having retired, Ms. Olga was still mentally and physically fit and active, so she was looking for opportunities how to spend her time in an interesting and mentally challenging way. She learned about the Internet from her children and together with her husband started to learn how to work with PC and use the Internet. They purchased old PC, moved furniture in the living room to create a “modern workplace” there. First she learned how to work with Word, then how to access and search web, send email (critical milestone was when she understood what “@” means), listen to music on the Internet and later also use Skype. She used email to communicate with her

<sup>10</sup> [http://147.232.145.11/kultura/senior\\_dom/index.htm](http://147.232.145.11/kultura/senior_dom/index.htm)

grandchildren and children (kept asking them to show her photos of small grandchildren) scattered all over the world.

Having overcome all these barriers, Ms. Olga could not understand why the other elderly were not interested and using PC and Internet. Then she realized that maybe they had bigger fears (because of their age, lower education, lack of support in their social environment etc.) than she had had and that she could share her personal experience with them. Together with a couple of other fellow ladies she established the “Senior Dom” organisation. They succeeded to get some financial support and established the first “Internet Tea Room” for the elderly (*Internetova čajovna*) in the Slovak Republic. In the Internet Tea Room they started to organize the first Internet course for the elderly. Beginnings were quite difficult and slow. However, mass media (local newspapers in Kosice) became interested in this and a couple of articles were published. Thanks to this “non-paid promotion” they gained publicity and similar activities were initiated also in other cities in Eastern Slovakia.

### **3.2 Work with Intermediaries to build services of value - Services provided by the Senior Dom**

The Senior Dom provides services and organizes activities of different types for its members, e.g.:

- Educational and training activities (running also a Senior Citizens Academy):
  - IT course (MM Office, Internet, Word, computer graphics etc.)
  - Language courses in English and German<sup>11</sup>;
  - Painting, history of fine arts;
  - Courses on memory training etc.
- Internet Tea Room – where the members have access to the Internet (including advisory services), it is operated also a club for the elderly;
- Sport activities – chess, football (for men), volleyball, but also mini-marathon etc.;
- Cultural activities – concerts, theatre performances, etc.;
- Organization of conferences (e.g. “Housing for the elderly” in 2007).



Fig. 2 Learning to paint



Fig. 3 ... and learning how to master Internet

<sup>11</sup> This is generation who, during the communist times, were taught in schools only Russians, and now some of them in their 70's, late 60's started to learn English and German.

The Senior Dom also cooperates with other similar organisations, e.g. civic organisation PORTUS in Prague (Czech Republic) – this is also an important dimension of their activities guaranteeing learning from others - on personal as well as on institutional level.

It is interesting to note that members of the Senior Dom were involved also in FP6 project MonAMI<sup>12</sup> (Mainstreaming on Ambient Intelligence) where they were testing the user interface of the software developed for the disabled and the elderly.

### **Plans for the future sustainability**

Thanks to the cooperation with the Czech organisation PORTUS they started to work on a new project „*Domov je doma*“ (“Home Is at Home”). This project is targeting the issue of independent living – to provide monitoring of the elderly in their flats 24/7 and in emergency situation provide healthcare service. This would be organized in cooperation with other organisation - a Retirement house for old age pensioners where permanent health care service is available. Another project under preparation is “Education and Work – Chance for the Elderly”. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the European Social Fund are potential sources of funding for these projects (so far not successful).

### **Promotion and Public Relations**

The Senior Dom is also quite successful in promotional and public relations activities, e.g. in January 2007 they organized a press conference (to promote their activities), thanks to this they were on Slovak TV (national broadcasting), Slovak Radio, regional radio stations, regional newspaper Korzar, etc. The director of the Senior Dom was invited to a round table discussion on the ageing of the population, training of the elderly an financial issues. Some participants of the IT skills training were interviewed by mass media on their experiences with ICT too. Thanks to this coverage in mass media they got also attention of municipal and regional government, but also of other potential sponsors (companies).

### **3.3 Identification of needs**

The Senior Dom is an example of a grass root, bottom-up initiative. People who started this initiative first by themselves experienced that ICT could help them to make their lives richer, to create an additional channel for fulfilment of their personal, intellectual, family, social needs. They succeeded to master ICT (on some level) thanks to the help of their children, family, friends – and then they realized that other elderly people in a similar situation may-be needed their help. So they did it - and it worked. From this perspective it was a kind of self-identification of needs and after establishing the Senior Dom it works as a “self-service” (within the community of the elderly, not waiting for help from outside of the community).

Before the project of the Internet Tea Room started, the following needs were identified:

- One of the major needs of the elderly in the Slovak Republic is elimination of loneliness, lack of information by which they suffer;
- It is necessary to reduce existing psychological, social, age and health barriers limiting the elderly in their everyday life, to satisfy their communication needs and improving access to information and services;

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.monami.info/>

- The existing Internet Coffees were run by young people and used by students and tourists – this was not a proper environment for the elderly. The elderly needed more personalised attitude, more patience, and less stressful environment. They needed specially trained advisors (special human help-desk for the elderly) – help/advice of like-minded people;
- A limiting factor for the elderly can be of course a price – this had to be taken into account as well.

Every success is a result of everyday human struggle ... There is an unbroken faith inside us to do something for the others and thus also for us ... We are a community of people who do not want just to keep taking from somebody else and demanding our rights ... We are aware of the fact that positive examples are attractive for the others ... We are a community of adult people and thus responsible for our own lives.

Olga Rodzinakova, Director of the Senior Dom, Annual Report 2007

ICT is for me not only a resource of information, but also a means of communication, a way of memory training and having fun ... not speaking about the Internet which dramatically increases our opportunities and can be used for various services ... But first you need to know how to master all these technologies ... And the Senior Dom was in this very useful for me. I think that PCs and Internet should be available also in the Clubs of the elderly, Retirement houses – and not only in cities, but also in small towns, villages and rural areas.

Dr. Alica Hovancová, 74 yrs.

I belong to the generation who succeeded to master PC just before retirement. Having retired, now I use PC and Internet mainly for communication with my friends worldwide, sometimes as a typewriter, playing games (Spider Solitaire, Tripeaks, Scrable in English, Blocks, Mahjongg, Freecell). Since I am a fan in taking digital photos, I use PC also for correcting photos and as a photo album. Simply it is a very useful “toy” for the elderly. Only the Internet should be cheaper! Taking into account my pension, it is a luxury for me. That is why I use the Internet in the Senior Dom or at my friends.

Ms. Eva Reitznerová

Being successful in their first activities (IT skills training, Internet Tea Room), within the “elderly-friendly” community new needs emerged and they started with other activities – teaching foreign languages, memory training and cognitive skills, courses in computer graphics etc. It should be mentioned that lecturers of these trainings are also members of the elderly community, which is considered as one of the success factors. At the same time it needs to be emphasized also in this case that ICT is just an additional channel of communication, it cannot replace human “off-line human contacts”. Members of the Senior Dom for example organize barbecue parties (for socializing) where they speak (more or less broken) English (so they are having fun) – but for preparation of this event they use for communication Internet and Skype (a simple multi-channel approach).

## 4.0 OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

### 4.1 *Outcomes achieved*

The Senior Dom succeeded to achieve outcomes of several types:

- Building up an active community of the elderly around the well established NGO;
- Increasing social inclusion and potential of self-realisation of their members through organisation of educational, sport, cultural, social activities;
- Development and delivery of ICT and other courses specifically targeting the needs of elderly;
- Building up a group of trainers/lecturers for these trainings;
- Improved ICT skills of the elderly (some of them for example started to use also eCommerce services thanks to this);
- Establishing contacts with a similar organisation abroad (Czech Republic).

### 4.2 *Assessing and measuring outcomes*

No rigorous framework for regular assessment and measuring outcomes has been set up so far. The most important outcomes seem to be those intangible ones – increasing the quality of life of the community of the elderly, strengthening social bonds, increasing participation in social relations, decreasing social isolation (some of them, previously living alone, found even a new partner within this community). It is of overall importance that this community is also trying to change the current “paradigmatic approach” of society to the generation of the elderly in Slovakia (this approach is probably valid also in other post-communistic countries) – from “passive receivers” of social care and financial aids to active members of the society willing and being able to help others (e.g. other elderly – by the way, who could be more familiar with their needs?).

Nevertheless, in the future some indicators for measuring the outcomes can be defined and used, e.g.:

- Satisfaction of the community members with activities and services provided by the NGO (measured by a satisfaction survey);
- The number of total members of the NGO (currently about 120);
- Number of active members (involved in planning, organisation, delivery of the events) of the community (currently about 30);
- Number of courses delivered;
- Number of participants in courses (in ICT courses so far about 350 participants);
- Number of all events organised per calendar year;
- Number of projects developed and submitted for funding
- Number of projects funded;
- Number of press releases, coverage in mass media;
- Total amount of raised funds per calendar year;
- Amount of money raised from own activities and provided services;
- Etc.

### 4.3 *Sustainability*

Sustainability can be approached from several perspectives, for example:

- Financial – according to the provided data in 2007 50% of revenues was from their own activities (which is very good) and the rest was from donations (2% of income/corporate tax from citizens/companies) and grants (Ministries, local governments etc.)
- Human resources
  - Management of the organisation – this can show up as a weakness in the future, because up to now the organisation has been established and managed by a strong personality, with leadership ambitions, in the future the organisation should pay more attention to capacity / team building, training in managerial skills etc.
  - Trainers – in selection of the trainers the Senior Dom was successful so far, it was one of the success factors. This can be taken as a good practice.

Based on the success of the Senior Dom in Kosice, there is already a plan to establish similar Internet Tea Rooms also in other towns in Eastern Slovakia (and also an interest and demand in those towns). Kosice Regional government is supporting this plan.

### **Success factors**

It would be useful to list success factors (strengths), which were conditions of the success in the past, but are also critical for sustainability in the future. The following ones can be mentioned:

- As a bottom-up (grass root) initiative the Senior Dom is close to the “end users”, it practices a kind of “self-identification” of their own needs;
- The “help” (except to some extent finances) is coming from inside of the community, not waiting for help from outside;
- Strong leader with good interpersonal skills;
- Working with the government on all levels (national, regional, municipal), previous experience of the director of the Senior Dom in municipal politics can be an important factor in this;
- For success of the training activities it was very important that the trainers are of similar age, with similar “historical background”, like-minded people with similar way of thinking, aware of (and familiar with) the fears of the trainees;
- Focus on promotional activities, wide coverage in mass media achieved – this contributed to raising awareness of the elderly, but also of elected representatives (once it was in mass media, it was of interest also for them, from their own political perspective ;-);

Of course, there are also some weaknesses (potential threats for the future), e.g.:

- It may be difficult to find a new leader in the future;
- So far they have not been so successful in raising significant money from the private sector;
- Lack of skills in management, especially project management (may be difficult to raise money for more “sophisticated projects” in the future);
- This community involves mainly people with higher education (many of them with university degree) living in a large city (Kosice has about a quarter of million inhabitants). It is questionable how difficult it will be to enlarge this community (to involve also less educated people) and to transfer this model to smaller towns or even to rural areas (taking into account also for example opportunities (and skills) to raise funds for running such an organisation).

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In general findings of the case study presented in this document correspond to the findings of the eUSER<sup>13</sup> (Evidence-based support for the design and delivery of user centred online public services) Specific Support Action. The eUSER survey has shown that significant barriers to eGovernment service take-up exist, most of which decrease significantly once eGovernment services are used. Much of this is the lack of awareness and unfounded reservations or fears on the part of prospective users, although both these issues vary considerably depending on the type of potential user, so that clear targeting and segmentation is needed in many instances.

The eUSER project has resulted in the following recommendations for the improvement of services take up and of acceptance by users<sup>14</sup>:

- Marketing and promotion campaigns by governance and policy makers.
- Guidelines for the design of quality and usable eGovernment services, issued by governance and policy makers, building on existing and best practices from different Member States and service providers.
- Guidelines for the design of sophisticated and personalisable eGovernment services, issued by governance and policy makers, building on existing guidelines and best practices from different Member States with a focus on serving individual needs usable within a multi-channel environment.
- Develop and implement programmes for rolling out eGovernment services and broadband infrastructures, ensuring that all areas, including rural and peripheral regions, are covered.
- Develop and implement training and educational initiatives for citizen Internet skills, by using a mix of online and offline components, with appropriate standardisation across Member States.
- Develop, implement and pilot Europe-wide measuring, monitoring and benchmarking activities to track progress on user-orientation of public online services.

According to the eUSER experts opinion, from the socio-demographic point of view, major factors acting as major barriers to eGovernment are to be found in the 65+ age group. This is due to worries about complexity, the anticipated effort needed and the absence of sufficient technical means. Incorporation of eLearning facilities as a teaching aid for this group can help, but doubts still remain regarding whether eLearning can play a large role for older adult education mainly because of:

- lack of ICT skills among older age groups;
- low rates of access to the Internet;
- preferences seem to point towards learning environments, which allow meeting like-minded people rather than learning from home.

This document presents results of the case study analysis conducted in Slovakia. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis:

- The elderly, especially the age group 65+ is a “risk group” in Slovakia, it is even more true for females;

---

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.euser-eu.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Bringing Together and Accelerating eGovernment Research in EU. State of play for Innovative Government. DG Information Society and Media European Commission, 2007. <http://www.epractice.eu/document/5019>

- Health and financial problems are on average the most serious concerns of the elderly this is reflected also in their attitude towards life and outlook for the future;
- Information society and eGovernment is making gradual progress in Slovakia, but in most of the indicators is far below the EU average;
- eAccessibility of web sites of public administration institutions is still an issue, recent survey showed<sup>15</sup> that web sites of the most of the ministries and central institutions do not comply with the Act 275/2006 Code on Information Systems regarding the eAccessibility criteria (the Office of the government and the Constitutional Court have the worst web sites from this point of view);
- Involvement of the elderly, especially 65+, in Information society services is very limited;
- Senior Dom is an interesting example of a grass root initiative serving the needs of the elderly, increasing their computer literacy and other skills and thus contributing to their social inclusion;
- On the other hand, it cannot be said that this is an “advanced example” of a multi-channel delivery of services, it is rather a precondition (or even *condition sine qua non*) for achievement of this goal;
- Such grass roots, bottom-up initiatives cannot of course replace, be a substitute of national and regional strategies and programmes (in eGovernment, eInclusion, multi-channel delivery etc., which are still needed (and missing) in Slovakia<sup>16</sup>) - the top-down approach. However, implementation of these national strategies should build upon existing local “islands of positive deviation” (such as the Senior Dom). It means a combination of top-down and bottom-up seems to be a way how to approach this problem;
- It should be also noted that when assessing such a case, history of the country, cultural context and background of the country need to be taken into account (what is presented as a success in one country, can be considered as an average case in another country with different history and cultural background). It is just an illustration of the fact that the issues (and potential solutions as well) of social exclusion have strong cultural context, there is a significant diversity even within EU, and the solutions cannot be easily transferred from one country to another;
- In this context the Senior Dom represents an attempt to change also paradigmatic perception of the elderly (within the cultural context in the given country) from passive receivers of help (also the governmental documents usually speak about “protecting the elderly” - which is a significant connotation in this case) to active self-developers, self-carers, with higher level of social inclusion, willing and being able to help to other members of the society;
- This “paradigmatic change” will however require also change of the attitude of the government – enlarging focus from “established”, traditional services (health and social care) to more “sophisticated” services, e.g. educational opportunities (training of cognitive and mental skills etc.), innovative ways of working for the elderly etc.

---

<sup>15</sup> SME newspaper, [www.sme.sk](http://www.sme.sk), Štátne weby porušujú zákon, 17 September 2008

<sup>16</sup> Information Society (including eGovernment) and (Growth of Employment and) Social Inclusion are defined as specific priorities within the National Strategy Reference Framework. Roma community is defined as one of horizontal priorities. The group of the elderly is not defined as a explicit horizontal priority in the Structural Funds in Slovakia.