

Main findings from “Youth survey” 2008 and “Senior citizens study 2009”

Executive summary

In 2008 and 2009, Maaailma Tutuksi ry conducted a series of comparative studies on two generations of European citizens, namely the youth and senior citizens. One of the sections of the questionnaire used for data collection concerned the investigation of patterns of everyday use of ICT in Italy and Finland.

It was explored how active **senior citizens** are in the use of ICT in everyday life. Despite the common EU framework, striking discrepancy of practices emerged comparing the current situation in Italy and Finland (Fig.1):

- *ICT-training*: the majority of Finnish senior respondents (61%) reported to regularly take courses to update their ICT-related skills and competences, while 58% of the Italians declared not to have ever taken any.
- *Internet use for social communication*: a high number (65%) of Italian respondents reported to have never used email for social communication. By contrast, only 18% of Finnish respondents gave the same answer.
- *Internet use for information search*: it was also asked whether senior ICT users browse the Internet to search for advices or information about health issues: while this practice is common for about half of the Finnish respondents, almost two thirds of the Italians never used the Internet for this purpose.
- *Internet use for eBanking*: while eBanking remains an unknown practice for 84% of the Italian respondents, it is regularly used by about two thirds of Finnish respondents.

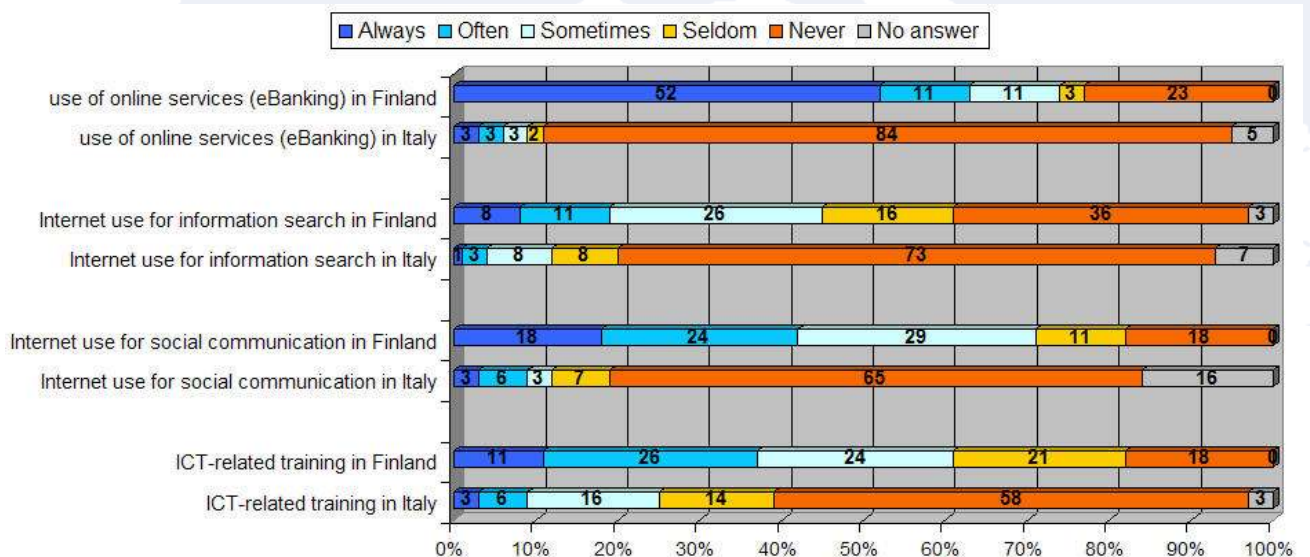


Fig. 1: comparison of Italian and Finnish use of ICT among senior citizens

The findings suggest that Finnish senior citizens have a more profitable use than Italians of ICT in their everyday life. Being able to independently search for information, update their competences, maintain in regular contact with family and friends and use public and private digital services, **Finnish seniors seem to be already used to active ageing in an Information Society. In this respect, Italy currently lags behind Finland.** The differences may partly be explained considering the higher education level of the Finnish respondents, which is due to the investments on adult education in Finland.

Less marked differences in ICT-related practices were found in the comparison of **Finnish and Italian youth.**

- *Importance of media:* according to 66% of Italian and 57% of Finnish respondents, Internet is an important element of the everyday life. When compared to other media, Internet was for the Italians the most popular media, closely followed by television and cinema. On the contrary, Finns regarded reading as more important than the Internet and any other media.
- *Favorite communication tool:* the mobile phone was the favorite communication tool for both Italians (59%) and Finns (70%). However, a significant number of Italian respondents (28%) declared Instant Messaging as the preferred tool for social communication.

The findings indicate that **younger generations of ICT users, both in Finland and Italy, do not face particular obstacles in relation to the key indicators of access, skills and motivation in the use of Internet and mobile communication.** On the contrary, they seem to have much media choice.

Comparing the two studies, it may be inferred that **more efforts are necessary to enhance the indicators of ICT use among senior citizens in Europe.** In this respect, development of skills and motivation seems as important as granting access to information and communication networks, as well as to digital services. Furthermore, **further research is needed to understand how to realize an inclusive information society by interconnecting both different generations and cultures of ICT users in a digital Europe.**

Helsinki, 14.11.09

Giuseppe Lugano
Special adviser, MaaIlma Tutuksi ry

Sources

- 1) Lugano, G., Lwoff, P. (2008) European Generations: a comparison of values, attitudes, future expectations and lifestyles of young Finns and Italians. Online report available at: www.forum-fennicum.net/docs/YouthSurvey2008.pdf Summary (poster presented at the Lifelong Learning in Europe conference) available at http://www.forum-fennicum.net/docs/LLinE_poster.pdf
- 2) Lugano, G., Lwoff, P. (2009) Senior citizens in Europe: attitudes, lifestyles and everyday use of ICT in Finland and Italy. Online report available at: <http://www.forum-fennicum.net/docs/SeniorCitizens.pdf>