

Digital Inclusion of Older Persons:
Harnessing digital technologies to promote the inclusion and well-being of older persons.

Virtual meeting, 11 August 2020

The event served as a springboard to the **59th session of the Commission for Social Development to be held in February 2021, where the priority theme is “Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all “**

With its pledge to leave no one behind, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is centered in the ideals of inclusiveness of all nations, peoples and segments of society in economic, social and environmental progress.

Technological advances are becoming entrenched in many aspects of our societies and hold the potential to create opportunities towards all inclusive and sustainable development and provide tools to surmount the challenges faced by many to fully participate in the development process. However, where access to ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) is limited and not inclusive, it can intensify existing inequalities and even create new ones.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates both points. Digital technologies have supported efforts to fight the virus by enabling access to healthcare (e-health and telemedicine), has allowed students to continue its education (remote learning and schooling) and businesses and workers to make use of teleworking to remain active, contributing to their respective economies. It has provided access to goods and services through e-commerce, including to food delivery services and others. Importantly, it has enabled family and friends to be connected through months of physical distance, thus alleviating social isolation. Yet, it has also shown that these benefits are not equally shared by all countries, and segments of society and that, where access to the opportunities provided by digital technologies are relatively or highly limited, many have been left behind.

Older persons are often among those that do not benefit fully from the potential of ICTs. For instance, a study in the United States show that while older persons are increasingly using the internet (67% of persons aged 65 and older) , many remain disconnected with 1/3 of older adults ,of using the internet, and around ½ not having home broadband services. This research also shows that factors such as age, income and education determine differences on technological adoption among this age group. In the OECD results from a survey on adult skills , it shows that older workers are less equipped to work effectively in a digital world with respect to younger generation with 1/3 of 55 to 65 year old workers, on average, having no computer experience.

This session sought to explore the data around access and inclusion of older persons to new technology, discuss the digital divide among older persons including by identifying the main vulnerabilities, reasons and the impact that such divide has on older persons ' participation in society, and provide some examples of successful efforts to promote access and inclusion of older persons, in particular through capacity building and life-long learning activities.

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