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Is the access to ICT perceived by policy makers as new producer of social inequalities?

The access to ICT and especially to Internet is often perceived as new producer of social inequalities. Lack of competences or lack of access to ICT impede using on-line services and information. One of the most important objective of the EU for next decade is to give everyone opportunity to participate in the global information society and to enable everyone to benefit from cheap, interactive public and private services.

The PROFIT (Policy Responses Overcoming Factors in Intergenerational Transmission of Inequalities) Project is part of 6FP and is aimed at determining factors responsible for intergenerational inheritance of low status. Participants of the project are from 8 European countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, UK). One of the most important part of the project is devoted to question what and why new social inequalities are emerging. The most evident producer of new inequalities is access to ICT skills. In the project we will try to determine whether in European countries with different institutional endowment and socio-economic context awareness of importance of the ICT skills is the same. During in-depth interviews (October/November 2004) with policy makers responsible at national at local level for educational policy we will attempt to check how important is in the politician's opinion education in computer day-to-day using. Our attention will be focused on categories of children and youth which are excluded from the access or which have limited access to ICT. In our opinion the categories are potentially "nouveaux pauvres" and should be now treated as vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

We expect that significant differences between Western and Central European countries regarding importance of the producer of inequalities and categories of vulnerable population will exist – in Central Europe more important regional aspect and socio-economic status of parents are expected, in Western Europe more important ethnicity is expected.

We hope that the interviews will be elaborated in March 2005.