Age-Friendly Standards Around ICT:
The Challenge of Co-Production With Older People

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ABSTRACT

As the European population ages, there is an escalating need for age-friendly standards to support development of effective products and services involving information and communication technologies (ICT), thereby improving usability for all consumers, including older people. Co-production with users through inclusive and participatory processes provides several benefits to standardization, including enhanced understanding of market needs, clearer identification and mitigation of risks, and increased legitimacy of the standards developed. Ideally, co-production includes users from a range of backgrounds. However, older people, especially those aged over 80 years, are often the least likely in the population to be involved. This paper reports on barriers and challenges to inclusive co-production from the perspectives of a range of stakeholders participating in the European Commission-funded project PROGRESSIVE: Progressive Standards around ICT for Active and Healthy Ageing. It identifies potential ways to improve the participation of older people in the co-production of standards.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, it has been recognized across a wide range of fields, spanning research, design and delivery of public and healthcare services, product design and standards development, that good practice includes co-production with relevant stakeholders. With regards standardization development, relevant stakeholders are identified by the standardization body concerned. However, an independent review (European Commission [EC], 2015) of the European Standardisation System noted that "inclusiveness" was a strategic objective (European Union [EU], 2011), that requires involving a wide range of participants including consumers and representatives of elderly and disabled people (p. 4).

Where standards relating to products and services that require citizens to engage with information and communication technologies (ICT) are concerned, the authors believe that it is vital to include older people and older people's organizations to ensure the standards developed are relevant and can contribute to active and healthy ageing (AHA). Such inclusion is regarded as especially important given the rapidity of technological developments and the threats (as well as opportunities) posed by robots, robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, citizens' organizations and standardization bodies have recognized that engaging older people in standardization can be challenging (European Committee for Standardisation [CEN], 2017). As Shin et al. (2015) highlighted "we need to find productive ways of making standards for newly emerging technologies in order to maximize social welfare" (p 156).

In 2016, the European Commission recognized that the role of standards related to ICT for AHA was under-explored and funded the Progressive Standards Around ICT for AHA (PROGRESSIVE) project (2016 - 2019). This culminated in the formation of the STAIR-AHA (STAndards, Innovation and Research in AHA) through the joint CEN-CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) framework, bringing together standardizers, researchers and innovators to identify standardization needs and opportunities and produce recommendations for future action.

The objective of this paper is to report on findings from the PROGRESSIVE project; exploring moves towards co-production and outlining its potential to improve the engagement of older people in standard production, thereby enhancing the relevance and validity of the standards.

BACKGROUND

The global age profile-is increasing, with a predicted rise in those aged 60 and over from 12.3% in 2015 to 16% by 2030 (United Nations [UN], 2017a, p 3). Furthermore, the European age profile is increasing more rapidly - 25% of Europeans are aged over 60, projected to rise to 35% by 2050 (UN, 2017b), with the largest increase in those aged over 80 (Eurostats, 2020). These ageing profiles led the World Health Organization (WHO, 2007) to advocate moving "towards an age-friendly world… [that] helps people stay heathy and active even at the oldest ages". This goal drives

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