

The role of the “TELSCAN” project in safeguarding the interests of elderly and disabled people in relation to the design of advanced transport telematics

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Abstract

The TELSCAN Project has been funded by the European Commission to help ensure that telematics systems and new technologies for transport, developed by other projects in the Transport Sector of the Telematics Applications Programme (T-TAP) of the Fourth Framework, are designed so that they are usable and convenient for people who are elderly, or who have disabilities. This initiative has been stimulated by both the principle that the products of research funded by the Commission should be available to all European citizens, and the growing recognition of the fact that the population of Western Europe is ageing.

TELSCAN has acted as both a source of expertise in the needs of people with special needs, and as a “watchdog”, proactively seeking out EC-funded projects that might benefit from TELSCAN’s input. Collaboration has ranged from the mere provision of advice on specific methodological matters, to the design and implementation of additional user trials, with the help of volunteer test subjects representing different disability groups, on behalf of other projects. Furthermore, TELSCAN has used its own funds for other projects to carry out such additional user trials on the basis of a sub-contractual relationship.

The description of TELSCAN’s collaborative evaluations on behalf of the ROMANSE Project provides an illustration of the importance of conducting such trials, using volunteer test subjects who, not only have special physical and sensory needs as a result of age and / or disability, but also may not be as familiar with computers and similar technology as the designers of telematic systems might think.

Introduction

Low growth rates in the European Union (EU) are resulting in an aged population, and by 2020 some 31% of Europeans will be Elderly and / or Disabled (E&D). The high and growing number of E&D people with mobility problems suggests that society, politicians and businesses should focus on these problems, because they concern a significant part of the population. Moreover, every individual should be concerned too, because we are all vulnerable to age and disability (Naniopoulos,