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LANCS-D4.3-RN-Equal-Access

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| Title | Research Note (RN) for D4.3 |
| Subtitle | Issues in Focus : Equal access |

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| PROBLEM | <input type="checkbox"/> | SOLUTION | <input type="checkbox"/> | Research Note | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Selected Annotation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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Categories: | | |

Summary:

This note addresses the paradox in promoting developments of sophisticated and costly ICT-based solutions to tackle societal and existential challenges, while promising fair access to the potential benefits.

CONTEXT

Strategic ICT innovation agendas are promoted to resolve societal and existential challenges such as social inclusion and cohesion, healthcare, environmental control, safety and security. They are promoted to improve efficacy and reduce costs.

FACTS

The developments of advanced ICTs have introduced unprecedented R&D costs and transitional costs within institutions and enterprise, as well as entirely new operational costs. They also pose a particularly difficult issue with respect to distributive and commutative justice in access to the potential benefits. This cost-benefit paradox is evident in the development of advanced ICTs to manage health, safety and security operations. It is evident in the development of eHealth technologies which are designed to take over some aspects of care, and of advanced bionics and implant technologies for therapeutic purposes. It is evident in the reorganisation of law enforcement and border control. Developments in these areas are very costly and they introduce occupational disruptions, throwing into doubt the general argument of cost-effectiveness and overall benefits from high-tech solutions. (see key readings, Satz, 2008 ; Ethics and e-Inclusion, 2008; Hildt, 2010; Looijea et al, 2010; ENISA, 2009; Cortés et al, 2008; Savulescu, 2009)

COMMENT

While technological advances can certainly make a difference for the better in many instances, the key problem is that there is no guarantee of fairness in rolling out the latest technologies to help people, to manage critical infrastructures and operations, and presumably save costs.

- Who is being helped?
- Who benefits from access to advanced infrastructures and service operations?
- Whose costs are saved?

There is no guarantee either that benefits will trickle-down. Rather, it is just as likely that existing conditions are reinforced, of unequal access to wealth and welfare, including technological solutions. Therefore, an unequal and potentially unfair distribution of potential benefits (e.g. healthcare, environmental safety, social inclusion) is just as likely as an equal distribution, fairness and justice.