

Strategies for eradication of poverty through the use of information technology and communications – UN ICT Task Force

1. Drawing up of new programs and the development of the ones in progress, within the existing institutions and initiatives, in order to ensure progress

Objectives: to promote awareness and commitment of the political leadership for ICT development by organizing national seminars for Heads of State and Government, Cabinet-level government officials and other policy-makers on the potential of ICT for eradicating poverty and for promoting other development goals, including education, health, e-government, e-commerce, and the need to mobilize resources for these purposes.

2. Creation of Websites and Portals

Objectives: providing a global inventory of activities dedicated to the eradication of poverty through ICT, posting ICT Task Force policy recommendations in this respect, providing search engines tailored to fetch the relevant information and links related to this type of activities, providing hyperlinks to websites of other organizations with similar concerns (Academies, Research Institutes, Non-Governmental Organizations, the private sector)

3. Development of stakeholders networks

Objectives: to foster the active participation of stakeholders at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels, particularly those of the developing

countries and the countries in economic transition situations, in ICT activities, with the aim of “bridging the digital divide”. The coherence and complementarities leading to greater synergy are of great importance.

4. Establishing a Media and Communications Strategy

Objectives: to rally global public support for developing our own strategy with the goal of bridging the “digital divide” and turning it into a digital opportunity.

5. Enhancing Resource Mobilization

Objectives: exploring and developing innovative funding arrangements and mechanisms that bring together existing and new resources, both financial and the others.

6. Providing assistance to countries in designing national and regional ICT strategies

Objectives: As a global policy advocacy body reflecting the views and interests of both national governments and other stakeholders from the various sectors of society, the ICT Task Force will be poised to play a strategic role in bringing together and scaling up efforts by the existing institutions aimed at fostering and at promoting the design of national and regional ICT strategies. It is very important to guide these efforts towards critical development goals. The development of some mechanisms will be established that are to provide assistance in the formulation of national ICT strategies in coordination with other development partners and specialized agencies, and to promote the best practices in the field, in order to avoid resource loss.

7. Supporting universal participation in new international policy and technical issues raised by the ICT and the Internet

Objective: promoting an open dialogue, participation and capacity among developing countries with regard to global ICT policies and standards.

8. Improving connectivity, increasing access and lowering costs for using the communications networks

Objective: to help provide access, including through community access points, to the ICT, particularly wireless communications and the Internet, to the majority of the world's population. Promoting the use of the Internet as an information and communications means.

9. Promoting national and international efforts to support local content and application creation

Objective: to help make Internet and other ICT relevant to the lives of the majority of the planet's population, including the poor and the illiterate.

10. Promoting ICT for health care and in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other infectious and transmissible diseases

Objective: to support development and application of ICT to strengthen health care systems and infrastructures to combat diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB, Hepatitis, cholera, malaria, etc.

11. Fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship in ICT for sustainable economic development, including poverty alleviation

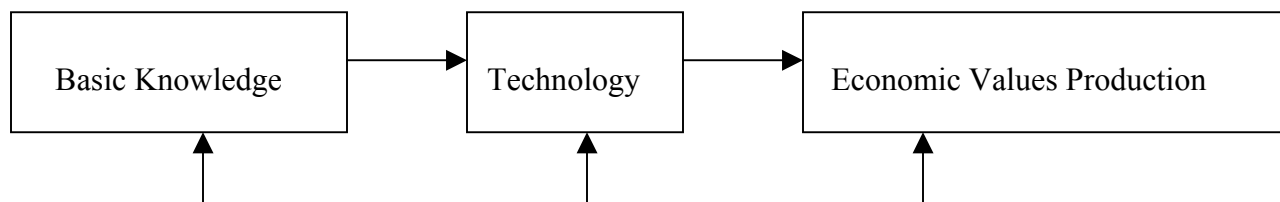
Objective: generating sustainable work opportunities for women and the young, continuous training and professional qualification improvement in the ICT field,

as well as including in the educational system the middle-aged and elderly people for becoming users of the information technology.

Topping Points – World Economic Forum Using IT for Poverty Alleviation

1. Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) is the economy where **information became productive capital**. In 1985, Robert Solow won the Nobel Prize for determining the relation between labor, productivity and knowledge. Solow demonstrated that **during the last 50 years, labor productivity has increased by 87.5 percent due to the contribution of technology/knowledge and only by 12.5% due to capital contribution**.

Fig.1. Knowledge, technology, economic values production, causal relationships



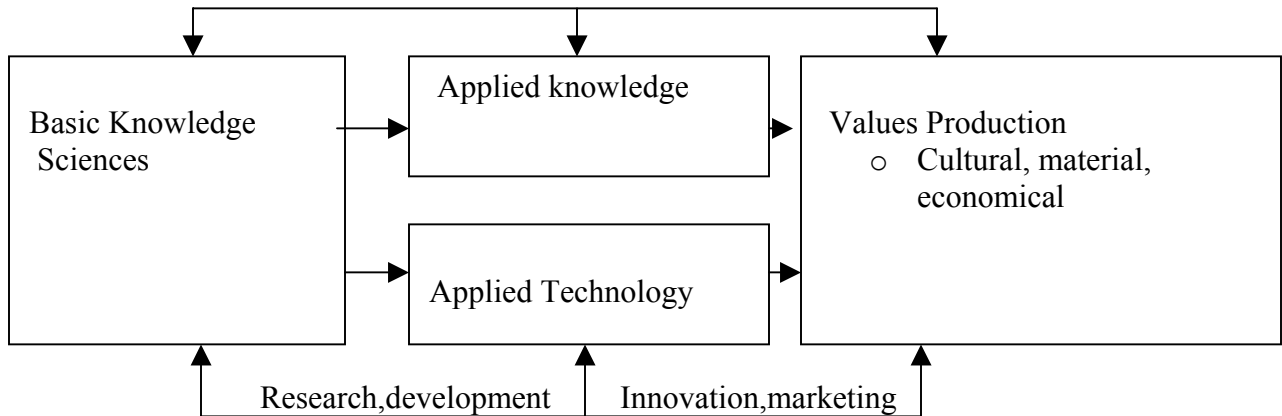
In the knowledge-based economy, the ability to generate and use knowledge (the innovation process) is not only a determinant of wealth, it is also the basis of comparative advantages. Knowledge is the fundamental means to improving quality and quantity of products. The rate of adopting advanced technologies is an indicator for the rate of knowledge gain. The keys to strong performance in the KBE are:

- the generation and acquisition of knowledge
- the diffusion and exploitation of knowledge
- the building of adequate infrastructures (knowledge infrastructure)

2. Education is a key factor for the investment in human capital and in knowledge. For developing a KBE, the universities have enhanced their **research capabilities to produce new knowledge more effectively**.

Per capita income and productivity increase as a result of the progress of knowledge, the demand for higher education also increases as an investment in human capital, thus upgrading the average level of education of the work force that is required for higher productivity.

Fig.2. A complete knowledge system (to learn, to think and to practice)



3. **The use of knowledge, ideas and innovation are increasingly becoming the principal engine of economic growth and job creation. Nowadays, economic success is based not so much on raw natural resources as it is on excellence in human resources. Ideas and entrepreneurship are, now more than ever, the key to better incomes and a higher quality of life.**
4. **Despite this progress, there is concern that advancements in knowledge and new technology could lead to fewer jobs, particularly for those who lack the required skills. This is because new technologies lead to new products and services, a higher quality of the existing products, lower production costs, all of which stimulate economic growth and job creation.**
5. **GLOBALIZATION led to the integration of the economies of different countries. Although this intensified the competition, the countries specialized in what they used to produce best. In this context, the new ideas and the knowledge became more and more important.**
6. **Governments must have a leading role in the following four areas:**
 - a. **A prosperous economic environment**
 - b. **Promoting knowledge and innovation**
 - c. **Continuous learning over the entire life**
 - d. **Enhancing social cohesion**
7. **Knowledge is recognized as being at least equally important as the physical financial capital, human resources in the process of obtaining economic growth.**

There are two great correlated forces supporting the building of the new economy:

- e. Globalization – economic activity is considered beyond the geographical boundaries
- f. Communications – cutting costs and increasing efficiency in the transfer, finding and analysis of information

Together, these forces create a global economy in which knowledge is used as input, as well as result.

8. Communications and Information Technology played a significant role in the migration of the national economies towards the model based on knowledge. As with respect to the population, these technologies facilitated the continuous learning, telework, and supported the formation of business communities. In the business environment, Communications and Information Technology favored the network development and de-layering of operations, due to the automation of production and distribution lines.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

Digital divide refers to the reality in which information and communication technology is adopted at very different rates that vary according to the socio-economical characteristics of the population. In fact, Internet utilization is tightly linked to the revenue level and education, age, residential area (rural/urban) and existence of children in the family. In the business area, the use of Information Technology and Communications is determined as well by the employee number: large companies use more IT than small ones.

ROMANIA

- Providing the schools and colleges with computers (access to technology and information)
- Continuous and distance learning- rural regions
- Participation to different European programs (eContent, IDA- Interconnection Data Between Administrations, Safer Internet Action Plan, IST – Information Technology Program) for the conformation to the international information flow
- Providing public services through electronic means - involving the disabled in the economic and social life
- Participation of Romania to international initiatives (eEurope+ action plan, Memorandum of Understanding e-Government: Greece, Albany, Cyprus, Yugoslavia, FYR Machedonia; e-Government ministerial declaration, Brussels, 30 November 2001)

- **Integrating the research institutes to the international network (the European program GEANT)**
- **IT training centers (preparing the work force, the teachers, the elderly)**
- **Information centers for the citizens:**
 - **pilot project launched in 2001 by MCTI**
 - **some city halls run CIC (information centers for citizens)**