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**Session:** The Social Consequences of Information Society

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This paper aims to discuss the development of the Information Society in Portugal, in comparison with other nations in the European Union.

Regarding the access and use of information technologies and according to the international statistical indicators (Eurostat structural indicators), Portugal holds an intermediate position, slightly better than the “enlargement” countries but at a reasonable distance from the leading ones, particularly the northern nations. This situation occurs in spite of the policy efforts directed towards building a strategy for the development of the information society in fairly similar terms to other European member- states.

The articulation of the data concerning structural indicators with national statistical information allows for the clarification of the Portuguese society’s situation in this matter. Low income and poor professional and educational attainment levels are the fundamental reasons that justify below average rates in access and use of information technologies, Internet connections and e-commerce. This social background explains also the scarce mobilization and the lack of interest shown by a large majority of the population towards electronic content and services made available by companies as well as the central and local administration. This sub-optimal use of information technologies and electronic services is extensible to the utilization patterns of companies and public administration, originating efficiency losses and misuse of installed technology.

This paper will attempt to show empirical evidence of these findings, based on ongoing research for a PhD thesis.