

## Measuring the Information Society – State of the Art of the “Grand Challenge”

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### ABSTRACT

The problem of measurement is the Achilles heel of the information society research. Despite, or possibly because of this reason, one can find a number of quantitative studies on the topic. In recent years, studies using composite indices gain broader media popularity. This paper presents the results of the analysis of most common composite indices used in information society research. It discusses the basic methodological issues as well as strengths and limitations of using such tools.

### KEYWORDS

information society, information society measurements, e-metrics, composite indices.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

None of the theories concerning the Information Society (IS) have managed to deal with two fundamental and interrelated (possibly insurmountable) problems: definition and measurement. There is no satisfying and widely accepted definition of the IS [1], [2], [3], [4]. According to Webster: „Reviewing these varying definitions of the information society, what becomes clear is that they are either underdeveloped or imprecise or both” [2: 21]. It entails a subsequent problem: it is difficult to decide which characteristics to measure of an indefinable concept. One of the most important if not fundamental

problems of the IS studies, is defining the universe to be measured (what and how to measure) in order to monitor development of the IS. This paper presents analysis of the chosen aspects of this „Grand Challenge” [5], [6], taking into special consideration popular tools for such measurement – composite indices (CI).

### 2 MEASURING THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The presence of IS issues in public discourse in the last two decades has provoked a rising demand for tools allowing to quantify occurring processes. A number of studies have been carried out aiming to measure different aspects of information and communication technologies (ICT) and IS.

The main, utilitarian, function of IS quantitative research is:

- measuring of selected IS characteristics,
- defining the developmental deficits,
- monitoring the occurring processes,
- setting objectives and development priorities,
- underpinning the basis for formulating and implementing development policies,
- assessing progress towards the declared objectives,
- providing arguments in disputes concerning regulatory aspects,

































