DigitalScouts
ENHANCING THE DIGITAL LITERACY
AND PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

EUROPEAN COMPENDIUM

Good practice examples of digital
participation of people 60+

DigitalScouts

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This European Compendium consists of **Good practice examples of digital participation of people 60+** is part of the series of the first publications of the Erasmus+ project **DigitalScouts: Enhancing the Digital Literacy and Participation in Europe** (cooperation partnership in adult education, project number: 2022-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000086499). The Compendium was developed in 2023.

Project website: **DigitalScouts.eu**

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INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital technology plays a central role in our daily lives, ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of age, is of utmost importance. Recognising the importance of digital inclusion for seniors, the **European Compendium: Good practice examples of digital participation of people 60+** is a valuable resource with illustrative examples designed to raise awareness of the topic and pave the way for further offers of digital literacy training for older people.

The **European Compendium: Good practice examples of digital participation of people 60+** encourages more inclusive actions by inspiring municipal stakeholders, policymakers, organisations, and individuals to prioritise digital inclusion for older adults. By embracing these good practices, it is possible to collectively work towards creating an inclusive and digitally empowered society, where seniors can fully participate in, contribute to and benefit from the digital world.

The purpose of this **European Compendium** is to raise awareness of the relevance of promoting and offering opportunities for digital participation of older people. Its focus is on presenting illustrative examples from the five participating European countries of how older people can benefit from using digital tools in the areas of health promotion as well as enhancing their cultural, political, and social participation.

The examples do not represent a comprehensive list of all the good practices identified in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Romania, and the Netherlands within the **DigitalScouts project** but are meant to serve as inspiration. For a more comprehensive and detailed description of the good practices, please refer to the **DigitalScouts National Reports**, available in the bibliography and online on **DigitalScouts.eu**.

Drawing on the expertise and knowledge of various stakeholders, including governmental organisations, non-profit entities, and community-based initiatives, the **European Compendium** serves as a guide to bridge the digital divide and address the challenges faced by some older adults in navigating the digital landscape. This will hopefully result in higher participation of older adults in different aspects of the digitalised world, i.e., health-related, cultural, political, and social areas of their lives.

DigitalScouts

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO IMPROVE THE DIGITAL SKILLS OF PEOPLE AGED 60+?

In an increasingly digitalised world, access to digital services and technologies is crucial to participate in social life. By improving their digital skills with needs-based education and support services, more people can benefit from the opportunities to improve their situation and help them live independent lives. Below, you can find a few reasons why improving the digital skills of people aged 60+ is important!

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INTERACTION

Digital technologies offer older adults the opportunity to maintain their social relationships and make new contacts. By using email, video calls, and social media, they can stay connected with family, friends, and communities, even when they are physically limited or live far away. This helps combat loneliness and isolation and promotes an active social and political participation.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

The internet offers a wealth of information on various topics, including health, public administration, finances, leisure activities, and current news. Through tailored educational offers and support services, individuals gain confidence and can now independently search for information, use online banking, make doctor's appointments, complete administrative procedures online, and much more. This enables them to be more independent and perform their daily tasks more efficiently.

ACTIVE MENTAL TRAINING

Using digital technologies requires learning new skills and using the brain. Acquiring and using digital skills enhances cognitive skills such as problem-solving, memory, and attention. This contributes to mental fitness and the preservation of cognitive functions in old age.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Digital offers often provide health-related information and applications for self-monitoring one's own health. Additionally, various activities offer an opportunity to improve participants' physical fitness while being supported and monitored by healthcare professionals.

SECURITY IN THE DIGITAL SPACE

With the increasing use of digital technologies, it is important that older people are familiar with online security, data protection, and how to deal with digital risks. By improving their digital skills, they can better protect themselves from frauds, phishing attacks, and other online threats.

Thanks to a wealth of insights and practical examples, this **European Compendium** showcases diverse strategies aimed at empowering senior citizens to engage with technology confidently. It can also be used for training if deemed suitable for the needs and interests of the learners. The **European Compendium** encompasses initiatives that promote digital literacy training programmes, intergenerational learning opportunities and the development of user-friendly digital platforms tailored to the specific needs of older adults. Not only do these initiatives foster digital skills but they can also foster social connections, promote active ageing and reduce social isolation among senior citizens.
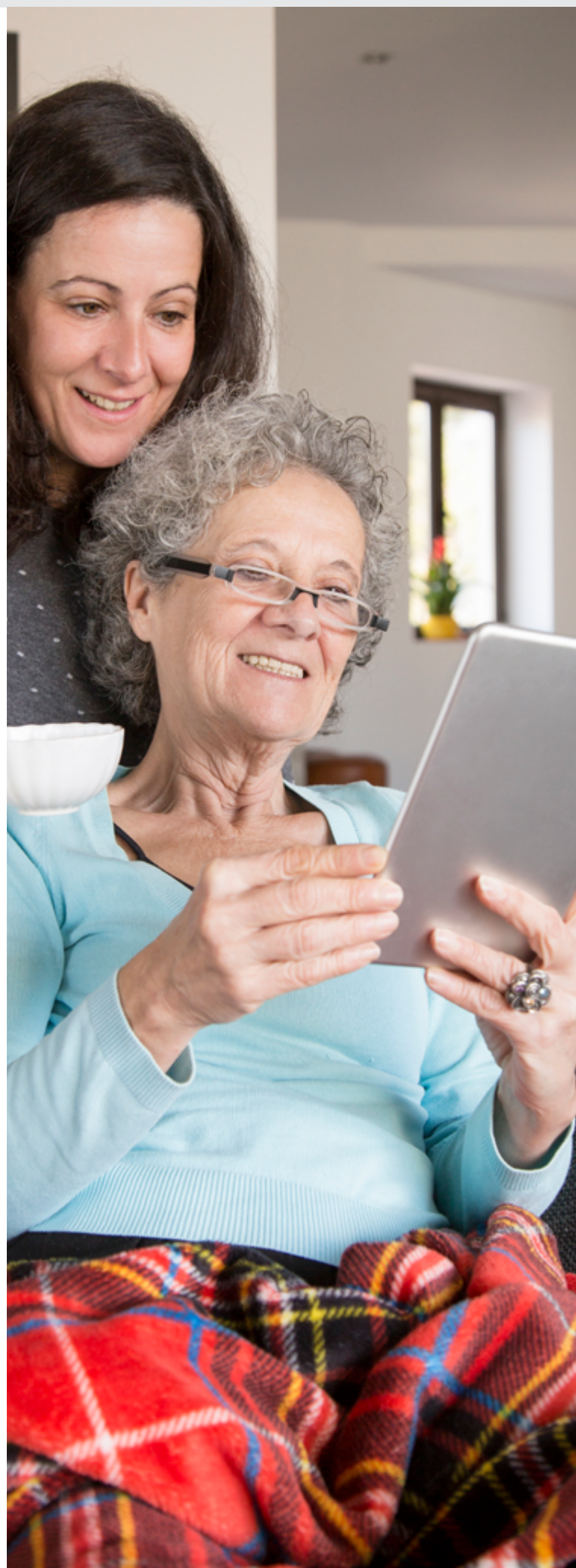
EUROPEAN OVERVIEW

STATUS QUO OF THE DIGITAL READINESS OF PEOPLE AGED 60+ IN EUROPE

In our globalised and connected society, digitalisation is increasingly influencing all areas of life: it enables new forms of communication, improves the efficiency of processes, provides access to a vast amount of information and presents huge opportunities and challenges.

As the advances in the digital world will continue in the future and further change our daily lives, improving Europe's digital literacy is of great relevance. In fact, gaining digital skills is more important than ever. Whether it's online banking, booking doctor's appointments or making video phone calls to relatives, digitalisation can enrich and simplify our lives.

Of course, this applies to everybody, regardless of age. Nevertheless, it is often the case that people above the age of 60 have lower levels of digital literacy than younger members of society. Therefore, they face a higher risk of being digitally excluded without benefiting from, for instance, the digital opportunities related to health promotion and social participation. In short, all areas of their lives can be affected.

In this context, the following section presents a brief overview of the European situation regarding internet usage and digital literacy of senior citizens. The figures are based on the Eurostat data of the European Commission. In addition to the European overview, the diagrams also contain information on the partner countries of **DigitalScouts** (Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, and Romania).

DID YOU KNOW?
DIGITAL INEQUALITIES AS DIGITAL DIVIDE

Digital gaps between countries, rural and urban areas and age groups are examined in research under the term "**digital divide**". Following Van Dijk (2008) "the digital divide [...] refers to the gap between those who do and those who do not have access to new forms of information technology."

Furthermore, information technology includes devices such as computers and mobile phones as well as individual skills to use them. Although smartphones are used by many to send text messages only, they can perform nearly as many functions as a computer. That's why individual usage and skills are crucial to understanding digital inequalities.

"Yes, digital participation of older citizens is very important for several reasons. It allows them to stay connected with distant friends and family through messaging, voice calls, video calls, emails and more. It can help them stay informed about issues that are of interest to them such as news, health or even accessing economic or government information."

POTENTIAL DIGITAL SCOUT, PORTUGAL

"For older people, new technologies, and digital engagement can mean a major improvement of their quality of life."

PROGRAMME MANAGER, ROMANIA

INTERNET USAGE THROUGHOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

In 2022, the share of households with **internet access** in the European Union had risen to 93%, up from 72% in 2011 (see figure 1 below). This indicates that a large proportion of households, including older people, have technical access to the internet and that the situation within the European Union is constantly improving. However, data on Internet access only provide limited information about its active use.

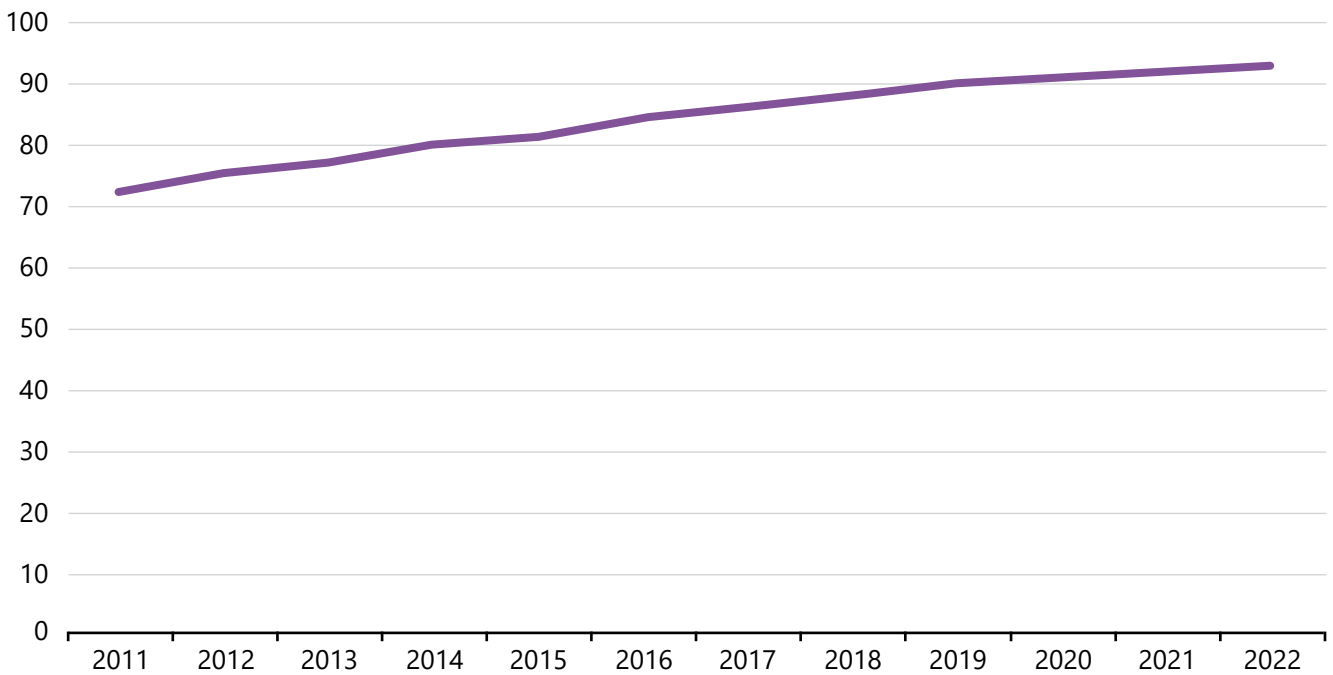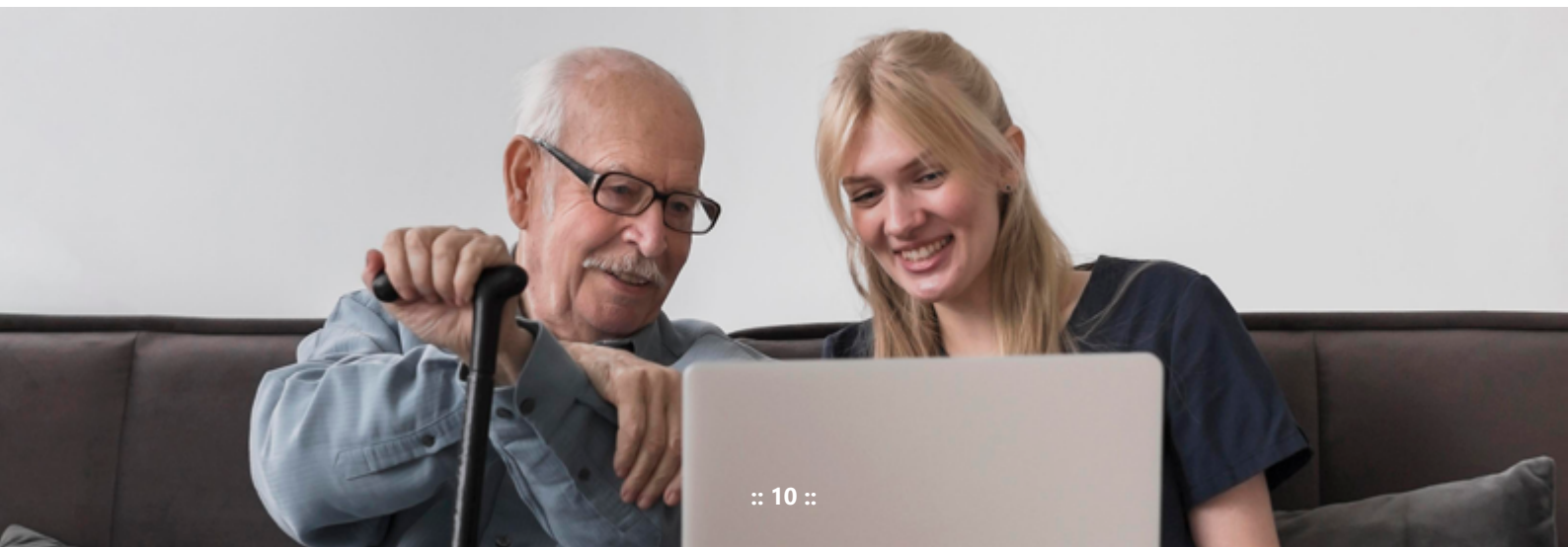**Households internet access, EU, 2011-2022 (percentage of households)**

Figure 1: *Households with internet access in the European Union - Eurostat 2023a*

Differences between countries become particularly obvious when focusing on **internet usage**. Countries such as the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Finland, for instance, have very high household internet use rates (98%) while countries such as Greece (85%), Croatia (86%) and Bulgaria (87%) have lower rates (Eurostat 2023a). On average, 91.13% of Europeans have used the internet in the last 12 months (Eurostat 2023b). In this context, it is particularly interesting to look at usage by age group (see figure 2 below). This figure clearly shows that internet use by people between the ages of 25 and 54 is becoming increasingly similar, ranging between 85% and 98% in all the countries involved. However, greater national differences can be seen with increasing age. Accordingly, internet use by older people (55+) is above the EU average in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria while Romania and Portugal fall behind in the comparison (see figure 2 below). In summary, internet use decreases with age. This is a consistent trend although the proportion of online users is slightly higher in northern and western European countries as people get older than in southern and eastern European countries.

Internet usage in the European Union, 2022

Legend: ■ EU ■ The Netherlands ■ Austria ■ Germany ■ Portugal ■ Romania

	22 - 54 YEARS OLD	55 - 64 YEARS OLD	65 - 74 YEARS OLD
EU	96,52	88,01	69,75
The Netherlands	96,28	97,02	91,11
Austria	98,95	91,73	72,56
Germany	96,58	91,58	79,13
Portugal	94,99	76,34	52,43
Romania	95,81	85,37	61,26
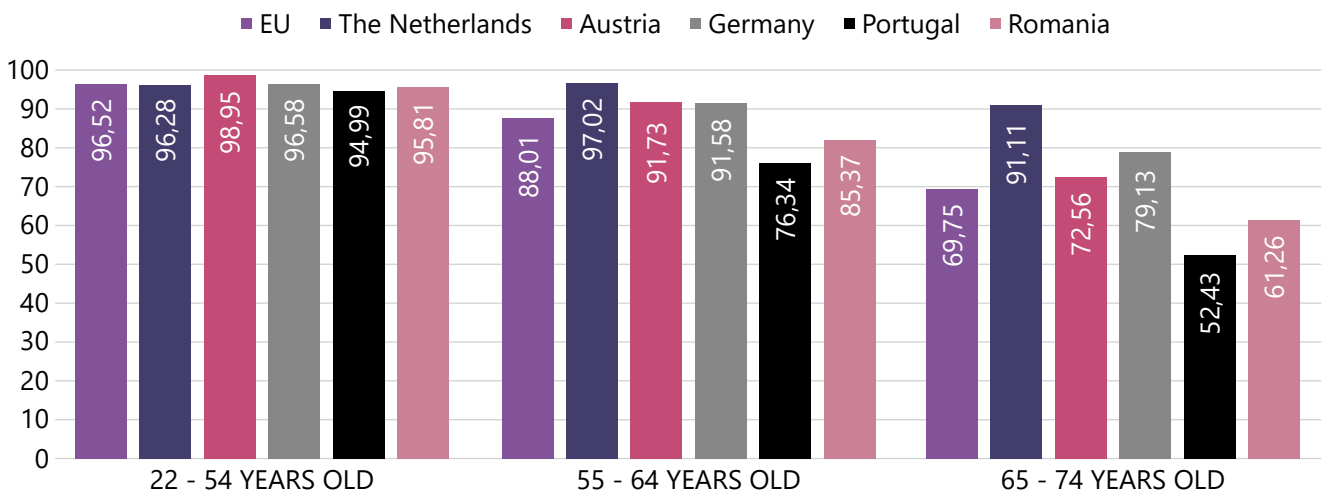
Figure 2: Internet usage in the European Union - Eurostat 2023b
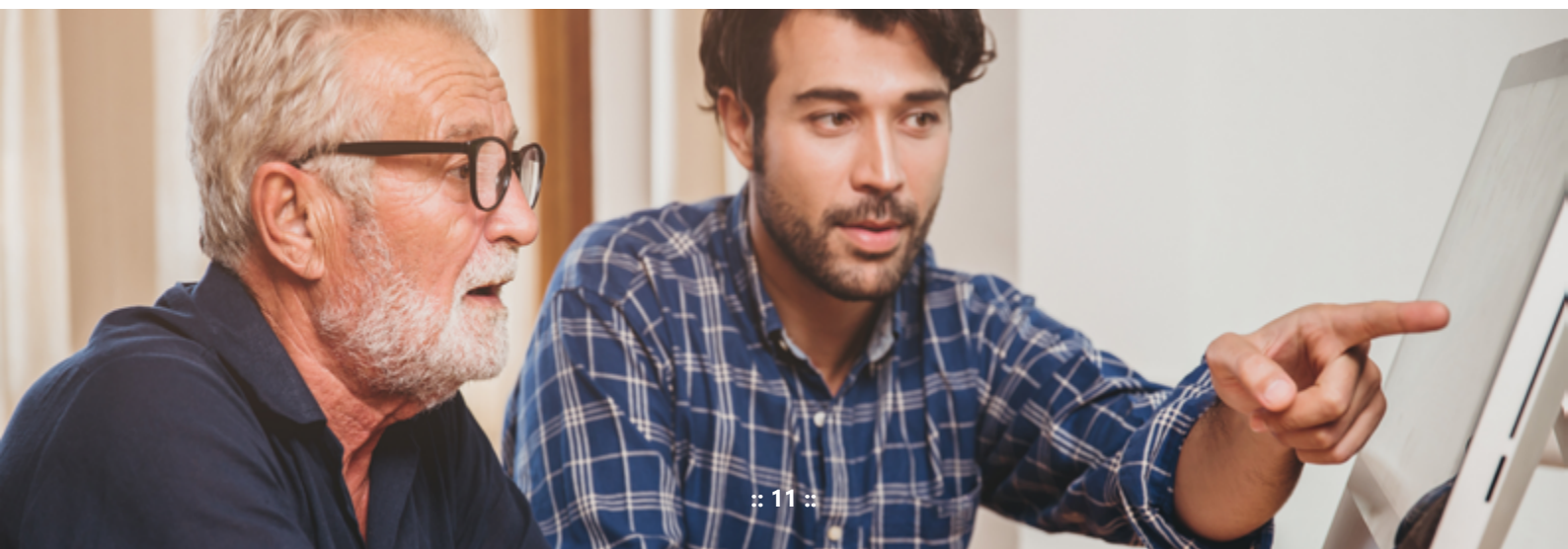
Another aspect to take into account is the affordability of the internet connection. In 2022, 8% of the EU population were at risk of poverty whereby there are big differences across the European countries when looking at the share of people at risk of poverty and being unable to afford an internet connection (see figure 3 below). It goes from Romania at the first place with 25% and other partner countries like Germany and Portugal at the 6th and 7th place, respectively.

Share of population unable to afford internet connection, 2022

(%)

■ People at risk of poverty   ■ Total population
France data are provisional. Luxemburg has a break in time series.

eurostat

Figure 3: Share of population unable to afford internet connection – Eurostat 2023c

DIGITAL SKILLS THROUGHOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

The following paragraph will give further insight into the differences related to the digital skills between different groups. Compared to internet usage, these can help to gain a more accurate understanding of digital literacy. The main indicator in this context is the measurement of the overall level of digital skills. Data on digital skills are collected by Eurostat every two years for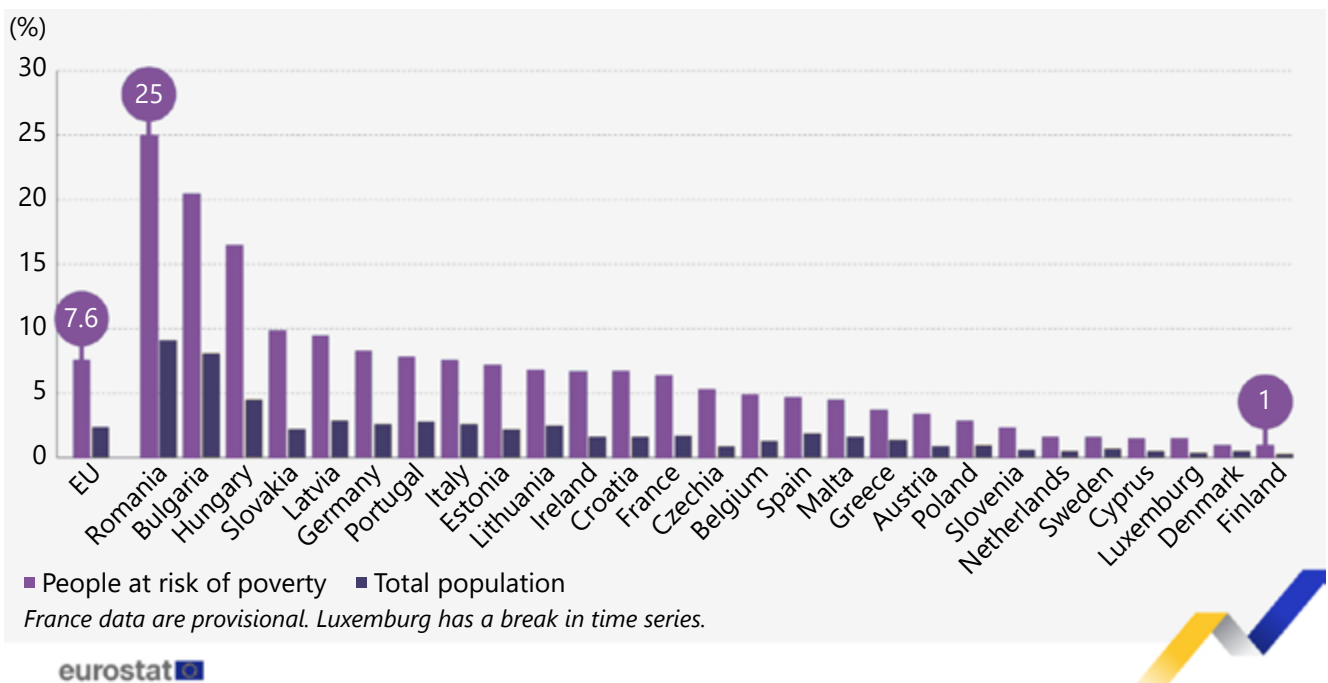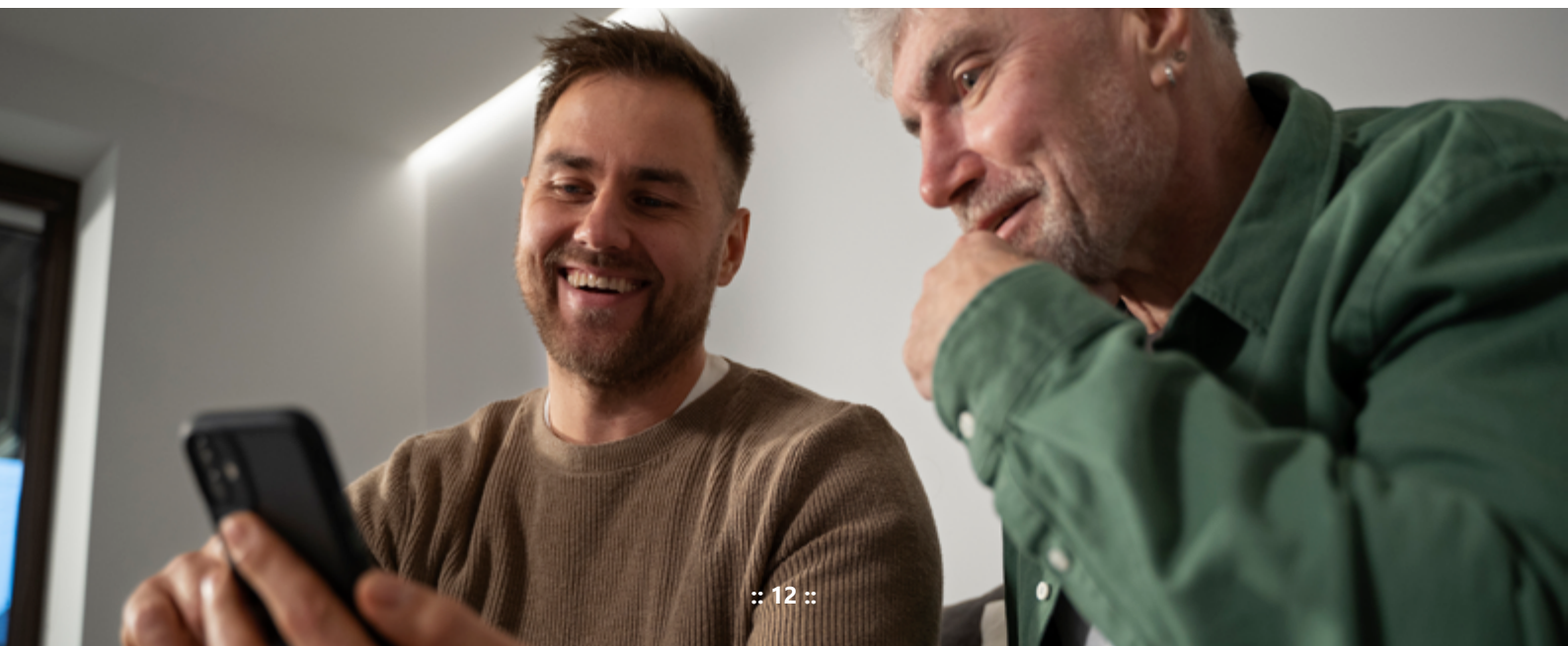 all European countries as part of the ESS ICT survey and provide a good basis for cross-country comparisons (even though the national statistical offices or ministries responsible for the measurement use different samples) (Eurostat 2023c). The Digital Skills Indicator 2.0 (DSI) measures digital skills as an index of activities in 5 different areas (information + data literacy, communication + collaboration, content creation, safety skills and problem-solving skills). The analysis assumes that the performance of the activities is associated with corresponding skills. Hence, figures on digital skills on the whole provide a more comprehensive picture than the figures on internet usage. In this sense, the level of digital skills is also used as an indicator

to achieve the EU's digital readiness objectives (Digital Decade and Digital Skills Agenda). In the following overview, you will find a short selection of the socio-demographic findings of the ESS ICT Survey. Here it is important to add that, in a lot of countries the data do not take into account the digital skills of people aged 75+. This is a problem that needs to be addressed in the future, also because the group of people above 75 is particularly affected by digital exclusion.

In relation to increasing **Age** (see figure 4 below), the first finding is that the proportion of those who have at least basic digital skills decreases. This information is highly relevant for the digital exclusion that is often noted among older people. A decreasing skill level with rising age can be seen in all selected partner countries. This is in line with the internet usage shown above in figure 2 'Internet usage in the European Union - Eurostat 2023b'. Consequently, people of advanced age have a statistically lower level of digital competence.

Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills (percentage; 2021) – Age

■ EU ■ The Netherlands ■ Austria ■ Germany ■ Portugal ■ Romania

	22 - 54 YEARS OLD	55 - 64 YEARS OLD	65 - 74 YEARS OLD
EU	62,14	42,04	25,45
The Netherlands	83,90	74,08	61,39
Austria	70,38	52,79	34,52
Germany	55,90	41,55	27,92
Portugal	66,43	36,27	16,57
Romania	33,67	13,56	4,16
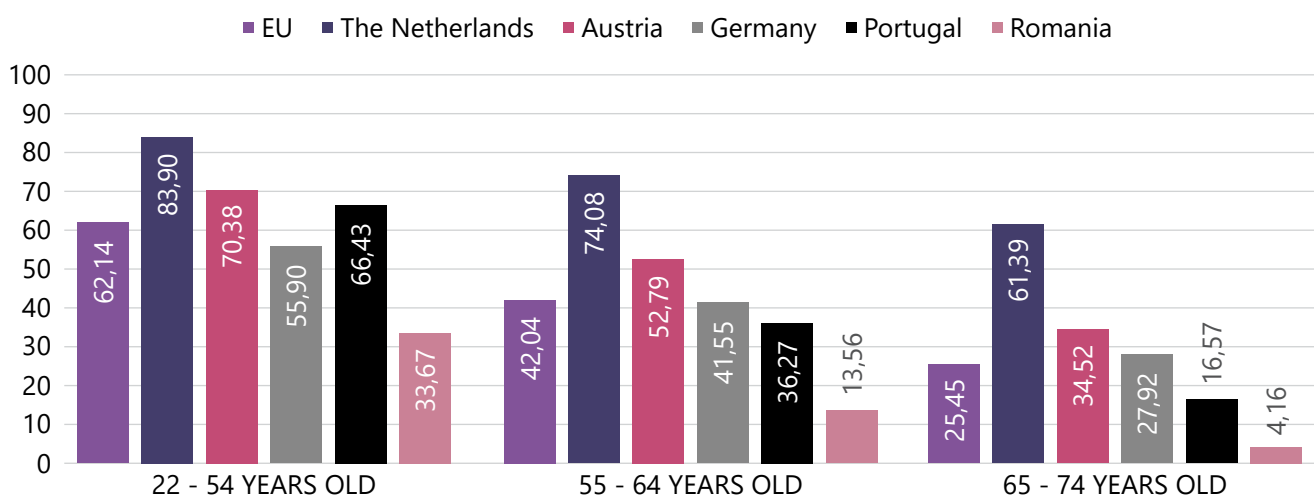
Figure 4: Individuals with basic or above basic digital skills - Age - Eurostat 2023d

In addition to age, there is also a clear picture with respect to the level of **Education** (see figure 5 below).

According to the findings, a higher level of education results in a higher amount of people with at least basic digital skills.

Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills (percentage; 2021) – Education

■ EU　■ The Netherlands　■ Austria　■ Germany　■ Portugal　■ Romania

Education Level	EU	The Netherlands	Austria	Germany	Portugal	Romania
55 - 74 Low Formal Education	14,70	46,79	14,42	12,44	9,06	0,39
55 - 74 Medium Formal Education	32,39	74,35	39,96	31,73	55,17	7,44
55 - 74 High Formal Education	66,35	89,17	75,79	59,72	72,69	47,80

Figure 5: Individuals with basic or above basic digital skills - Education - Eurostat 2023e

Furthermore, the Eurostat data show a **Gender** gap (see figure 6 below) in terms of digital skills. In all **DigitalScouts** partner countries and in a European comparison, older men have on average a higher level of digital skills compared to women of the same age group. This reveals a gender gap at European level that needs to be bridged. As reported in the **Bridge the gap!** project, this can, for instance, result from the fact that older women have more often worked in jobs that are less technology-related and therefore have less digital experience.

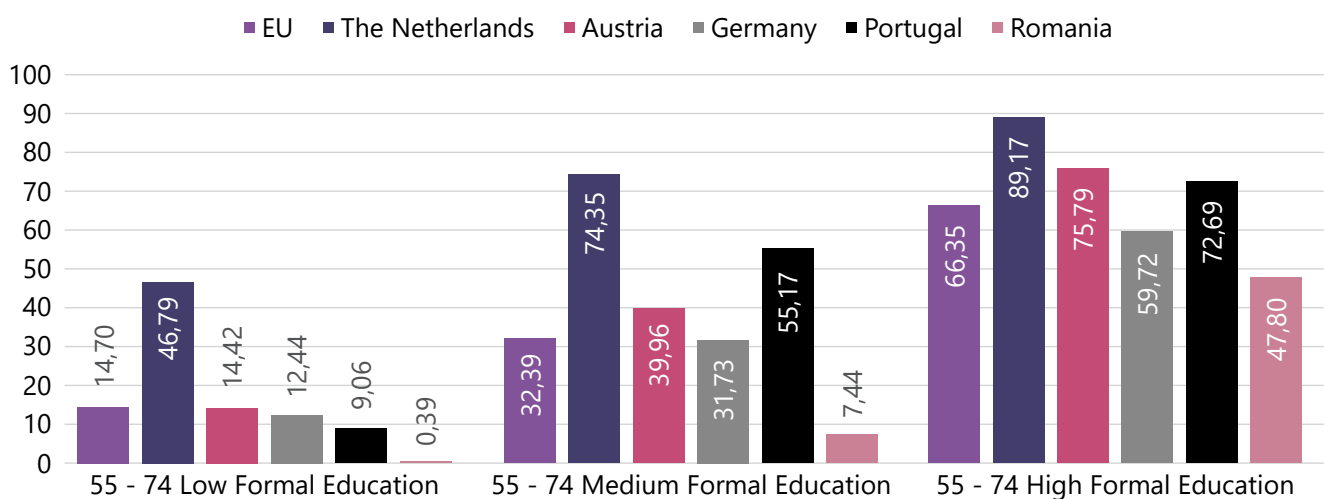**Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills (percentage; 2021) – Gender**
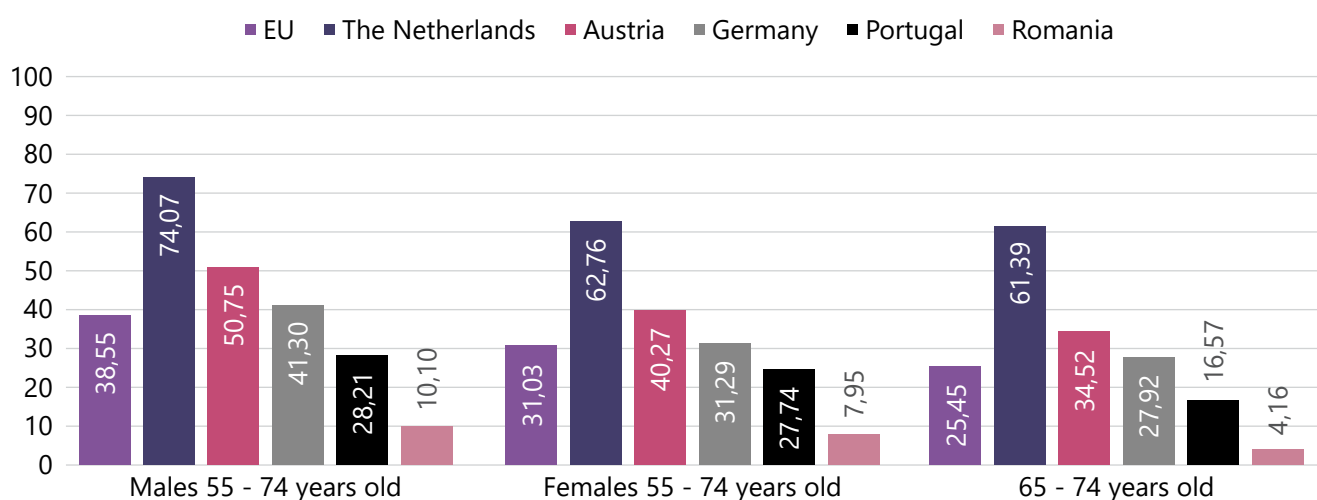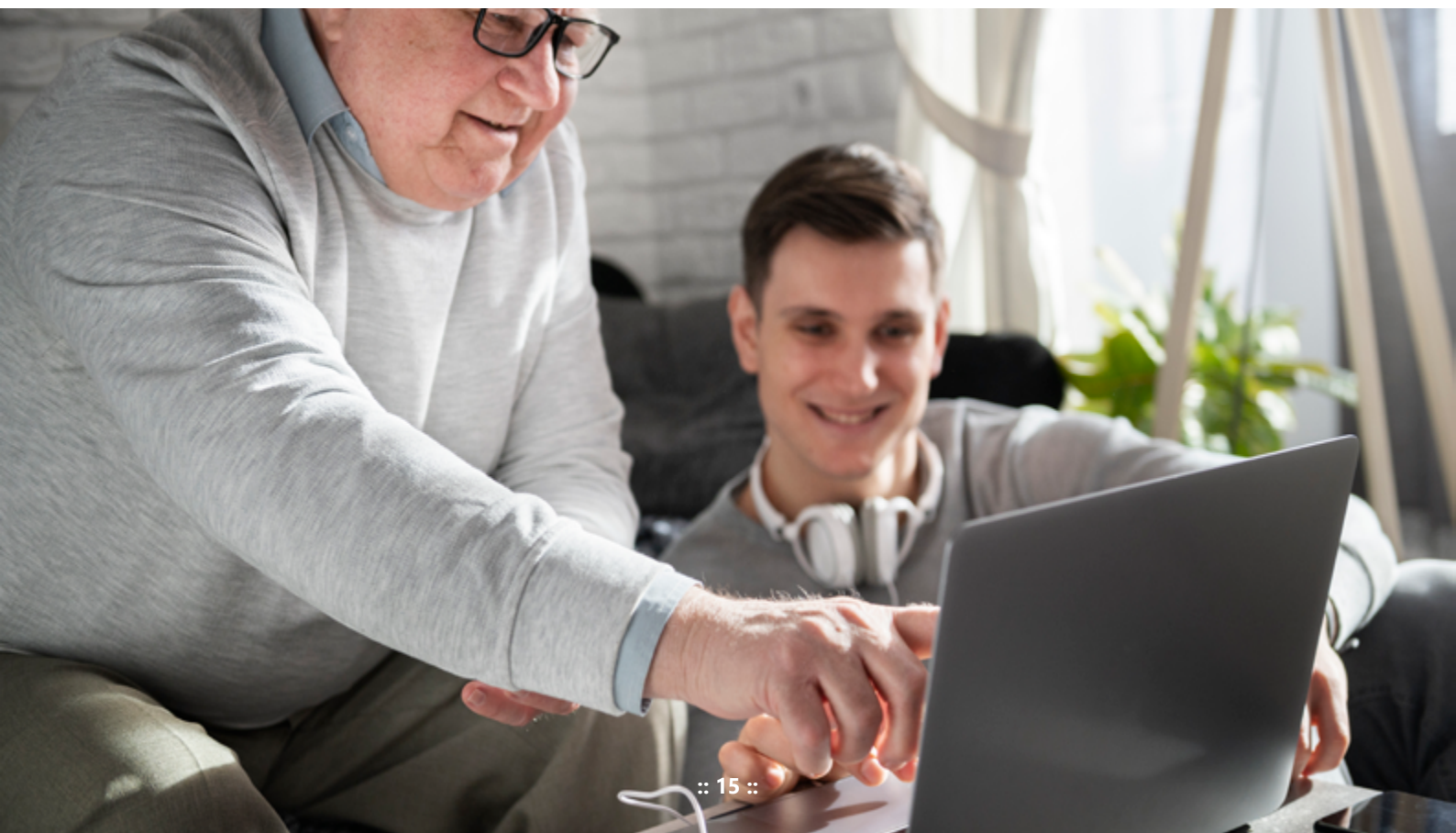

Figure 6: Individuals with basic or above basic digital skills - Gender - Eurostat 2023f

Finally, there is a trend in the European Union and all partner countries in the **Residential Setting** (see figure 7 below). It is clear from the figure, that people living in less densely populated areas have, on average, a lower level of digital skills. According to the expert interviews conducted within the **DigitalScouts** project, this is also related to the poorer accessibility of support structures in rural regions. However, this is precisely why digital competence in rural areas is crucial, as online solutions such as medical online appointments are becoming more and more effective.

Individuals with basic or above basic digital skills (percentage; 2021) – Residential Setting

Legend: ■ EU ■ The Netherlands ■ Austria ■ Germany ■ Portugal ■ Romania

Living in cities: 60,95 / 80,54 / 70,82 / 53,04 / 63,98 / 37,59
Living in towns or suburbs: 51,72 / 76,88 / 61,39 / 46,60 / 53,31 / 29,30
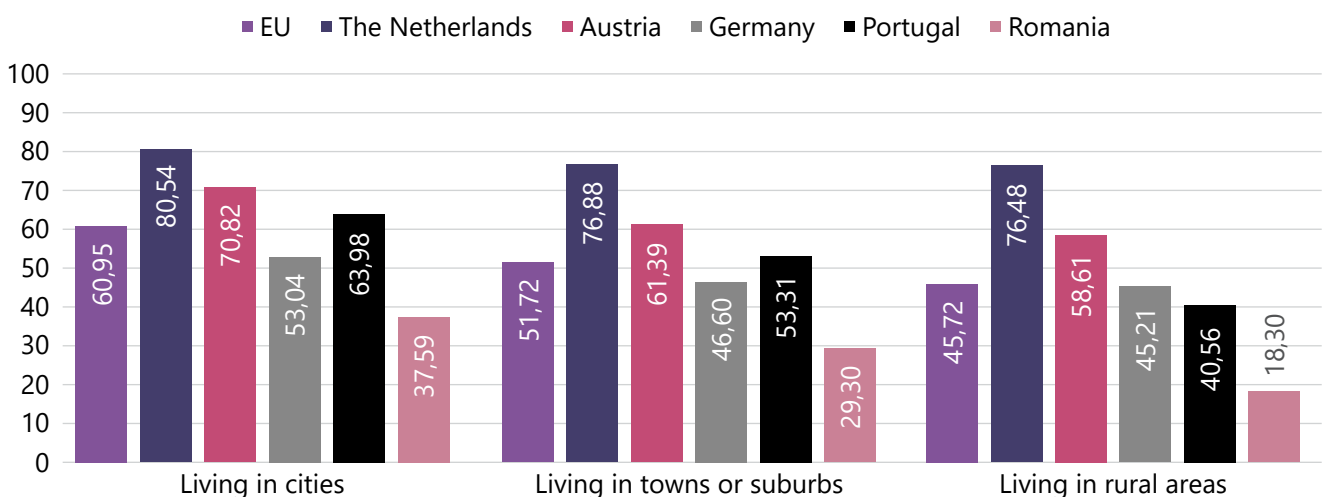Living in rural areas: 45,72 / 76,48 / 58,61 / 45,21 / 40,56 / 18,30

Figure 7: Individuals with basic or above basic digital skills – Residential Setting - Eurostat 2023g

SUMMARY AND COUNTRY DIFFERENCES

To summarise, the prevalence of basic digital skills varies significantly across EU member states. On average, about two in five Europeans aged 16-74 lack basic digital skills (**Digital education initiatives**). Nevertheless, the above statistics show clear correlations between age, level of education, gender, and residential settings on the one hand, and level of digital literacy on the other hand.

In addition to the common trends that have been described, there are also findings that demonstrate national differences. For instance, the fact that public libraries are funded by a national digitisation programme in order to support digital literacy training may be one of the factors contributing to the high level of literacy among older Dutch citizens. Similar programmes have been introduced in other countries too but only fairly recently. Figure 8 shows that low proportions of people with basic or higher digital skills in Romania could be the result of the absence of a national digitalisation programme and, therefore, no educational facilities are available. Consequently, there are often no computers or smartphones to practise on and purchasing them can be a financial burden. In this respect, financial barriers can also explain the low number of people with basic or higher digital skills in Portugal given its high cost of mobile internet (the second highest in the European Union) - **ANACOM 2023**.

"It would be beneficial to develop tailor-made programmes, adapted to the needs and knowledge level of each individual, as well as competency assessment tools. It would also be useful to involve public authorities and non-governmental organisations more closely in the development of such programmes (...)"

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ROMANIA

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE

ABOUT THE SPECIFIC SITUATION IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES?

If you are interested and want to find out more about the specific situation in the partner countries, you can also check out the **DigitalScouts National Reports** written in English. Choose your country of interest below by clicking the national flag:

AUSTRIA   **GERMANY**   **NETHERLANDS**   **PORTUGAL**   **ROMANIA**

As the findings above suggest, there are many challenges in relation to the digital inclusion of older adults. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic showed that some older adults often struggle with digital solutions, such as alert and warning apps. In general, however, more and more public services are continuously becoming available online in the digital world, such as e-health, e-taxes and e-ID (i.e., online driving license) solutions - **The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) of the European Commission**. Unfortunately, this process often means fewer opportunities to use analogue services. Nevertheless, it is essential to create inclusive educational offers, establish structures to support individuals in the development of digitalisation and thus, ensuring the participation of all ages in a digitalised society.

In this context, several different measures that can promote digital inclusion for older individuals are already known. These include, for example, the provision of digital training and support, the promotion of digital skills and the adaptation of technologies to people's needs. In the following, it is possible to find a selection of specific EU programmes and plans to promote digital literacy and improve citizens' digital skills.

Share of digitally available public services (Score 0 to 100; 2022)
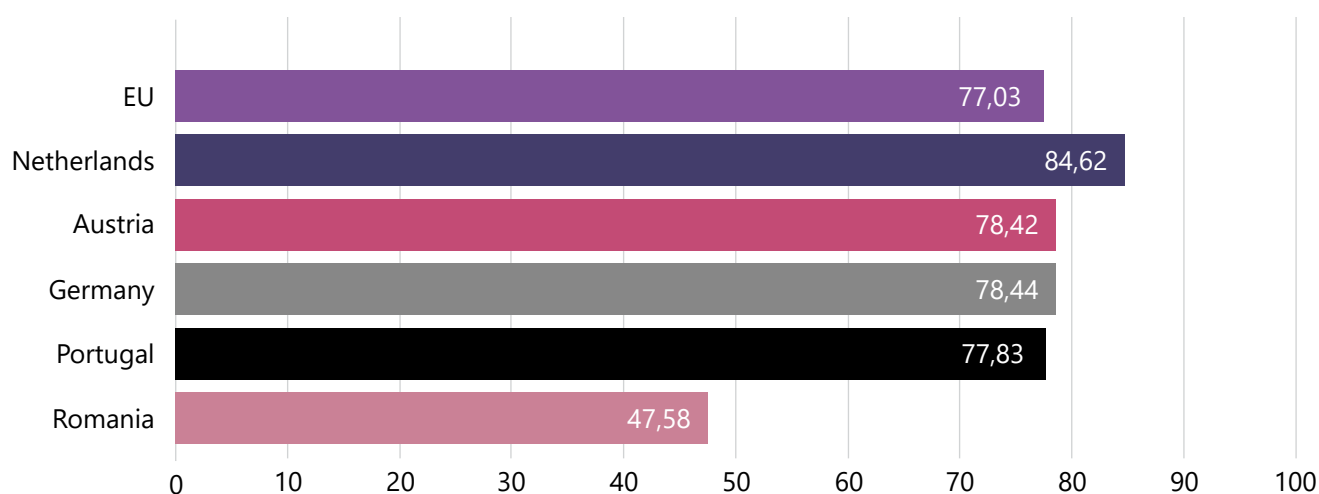
Country	Score
EU	77,03
Netherlands	84,62
Austria	78,42
Germany	78,44
Portugal	77,83
Romania	47,58

Figure 8: Digital public services for citizens – DESI 2023 Indicators

EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES AND PLANS ON DIGITAL SKILLS

In recent years, the European Union has already recognised that measures are needed to promote digital literacy and improve citizens' digital skills. As a result, the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles** was signed by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Commission in December 2022. It formulates the following principles for the further work of the EU:

Putting people and their rights at the centre of the digital transformation

Supporting solidarity and inclusion

Ensuring freedom of choice online

Fostering participation in the digital public space

Increasing safety, security, and empowerment of individuals

Promoting the sustainability of the digital future

These objectives are pursued, among others, with the **European Digital Plan**. This plan, called '**Digital Decade**', aims to advance the digital transformation of Europe by 2030. Among other things, it provides for 80% of the population to have basic digital skills. In addition, the digitalisation of public services and companies is to be promoted through a reallocation of the EU budget.

In line with the goals of the 'Digital Decade' is the **European Skills Agenda**. This is a EU five-year plan that runs until 2025 to help individuals and companies develop and use more and better digital skills. The main objective is to strengthen sustainable competitiveness, as set out in the European Green Deal, and to ensure social fairness by implementing access to education, training and lifelong learning for all people in the EU, as called for in the European Social Pillar. The agenda includes a total of 12 measures divided into four priority areas. These include, among others, a 'Skills Pact' to join forces and act together, measures to strengthen skills intelligence, EU support for national upgrading measures, proposals for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training and the promotion of scientists and support for the green and digital transformation.

In order to offer further support, the European Union has launched the **Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)**. This action plan sets out a shared vision for high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education in Europe. It focuses on two strategic priorities: promoting a high-performing digital education system and improving digital skills for digital transformation. To achieve these goals, the action plan contains various measures. These include structured dialogues with Member States, recommendations for successful digital education and training, the promotion of blended learning, the development of a European framework for digital educational content, the provision of connectivity and digital equipment for educational institutions, and ethical guidelines for the use of AI and data in education.

Of course, there are also many other initiatives and programmes that contribute to the promotion of digital education in Europe. These include the **SELFIE tool** to support teachers' digital literacy, or cooperation with the European Investment Bank to fund digital infrastructure and skills development. Moreover, the **Erasmus+ programme**, which focuses on green and digital education, as well as the European Social Fund and the **Digital Europe Programme**, which focuses on improving digital structures in public administrations, are important in this context.

Overall, the European Union is already making considerable efforts to promote digital education and strengthen people's digital skills. Through cooperation at the European level, the foundations are to be laid for a future in which all citizens can benefit equally from the opportunities of the digital world.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT SUPPORT SERVICES IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES?

In addition to the above-mentioned EU programs, digital competencies are also being promoted at national level. As a basis for this **European Compendium**, National Reports were prepared by the **DigitalScouts** partner countries to give an overview of the national support systems. Simply click on the corresponding country flags to access the **DigitalScouts National Reports** (only available in English) and find more information about the specific situation in the partner countries and the opportunities throughout Europe:

**AUSTRIA**   **GERMANY**   **NETHERLANDS**   **PORTUGAL**   **ROMANIA**

EUROPEAN GOOD PRACTICES :: 2 ::

In this section you will find a number of digital tools and services that were identified as inspiring examples during the first phase of the DigitalScouts project. These examples show that there are many opportunities in the digital world that older people can potentially benefit from. The examples may also intrigue them and get them to use (and learn to use) digital tools. The purpose of these examples consists in promoting digital participation and health promotion through digital means, if trainers or supporters find the tool(s) that meet the interests and needs of the people they are transferring knowledge to. A more detailed description can be found in each National Report. The examples also serve as inspiration for those who wish to create or develop a digital offer or service themselves.

PHASES TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE

IDENTIFY → DESIGN → PURPOSE → EMPOWER → ACCOMPANY → IMPACT
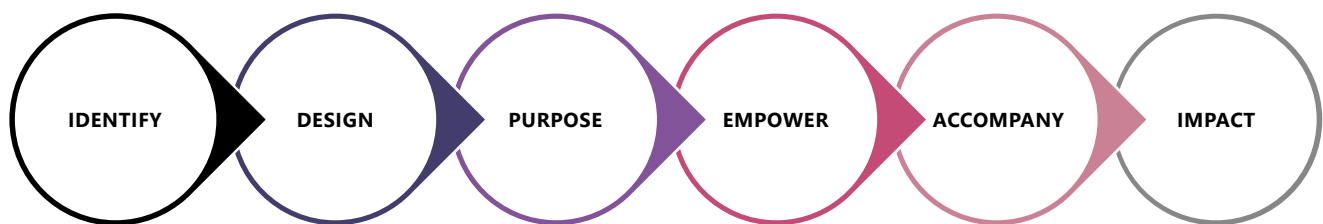
After analysing the whole set of good examples that were described in the 5 National Reports, the following steps have been identified in the process of successfully providing a tool or service for digital inclusion and participation of the corresponding target groups:

These steps go from the identification of the target group and the demand, through the participatory design to ensure an easy usage, and making it appealing and meaningful, while empowering the users and providing support during the whole process in order to achieve a higher societal impact.

This document describes how these practices approach these phases giving general recommendations for a successful development and implementation of a best practice. Additionally, this section provides the opportunity to identify the current phase of the offer or service that is being provided or developed, either being built up from scratch, or already positioned at one of the development phases.

"Many partners involved in local work with older people would like to become multipliers or knowledge mediator, but they don't really know how to start and have many questions."

PROJECT MANAGER, GERMANY

IDENTIFY THE TARGET GROUP AND ITS NEEDS
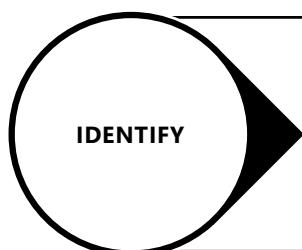
IDENTIFY

Identifying the target group and its needs:

- Knowing the demand
- Reaching the target group
- Rethinking and expanding the target group

In the first phase of a successful practice for digital inclusion of people aged over 60, it is essential to know whom you are addressing in order to understand their needs and barriers and know how to reach the target group. This step involves conducting thorough research, engaging with older adults, and gaining insights into their digital literacy levels, interests, and challenges. By understanding their unique circumstances and aspirations, you can ensure that the tool or service is designed to address their specific requirements and facilitate their digital participation.

KNOWING THE DEMAND

For this, you first need to frame the demand and what your target group needs, so that you can create a service or tool that will bring them a clear benefit or value.

Once you have identified the target group, you need to identify the needs of your target group. One effective way is to offer a tool where they can directly inform you about their needs, demands and barriers. This is also very helpful when considering that the needs might also evolve over time, due to extrinsic or intrinsic changes in personal conditions. The following practice presents an example of how to find out the needs of your target group. It is important to keep an open mind when thinking of ways to reach them. It is also important to rethink your target group and be flexible in terms of

target group and service provided once they are defined.

The Portuguese online platform **Participa.gov** is a good example of how to give your target group the opportunity to express themselves and share their views and needs directly with you. The platform is provided by the public administration of Portugal and aims to simplify political participative processes. On this platform, citizens can share their opinion and needs, so that you can find a suitable solution for the issue that has been reported. Another additional benefit is that people with a lower level of literacy are included in political decisions and more people will be reached and heard.

• **Website Participa.gov**

REACHING THE TARGET GROUP

In Austria and Germany, people are using a civil society platform **Omas Gegen Rechts**, a voluntary initiative primarily run by older women who are organising mostly on-site activities, such as protests and demonstrations, empowering, creating a community and raising awareness throughout these countries on relevant and political issues, such as ageism and other types of discrimination against people of any age. This way, older women enjoy options to make their voices heard and influence the political agenda.

An interesting fact about this good practice is that it started as a Facebook group in Austria, raising awareness on various political topics and offering activities for the group itself. What can be clearly seen is that in the last years the usage of social media has increased continuously world-wide among older adults with 34% of people older than 65 using Facebook (Dixon, 2023). Therefore, Facebook should not be overlooked as a communication channel to reach and connect older people. It can even be used to reach younger generations, even though the usage of Facebook by people aged 13 to 17 decreased from 72% in 2015 down to 34% in 2022 as they started using other social media platforms such as YouTube and Tik Tok. Omas Gegen Rechts successfully connected older people and provided them with the opportunity of becoming politically and socially active. When working with older adults, social media can be the starting point of your solution.

- **Website Omas Gegen Rechts Germany**
- **Website Omas Gegen Rechts Austria**
- **YouTube Omas Gegen Rechts Austria**

Photo by: Jana Eckert

There are several Dutch apps, such as **MeldR**, **Slim Melden** and **BuitenBeter**, through which citizens are encouraged to report issues they face on the day-to-day life to the municipality. This way, the public can directly share and express their needs. By addressing topic of high relevance for the target group the service or tool provided becomes very useful and fulfilling and has a practical purpose. Additionally, the public is kept informed of the actions taken, so that they are reminded of the importance of their contribution and are motivated to continue collaborating with the municipality.

- **Website MeldR**
- **Website Slim Melden**
- **Play Store BuitenBeter**

RETHINKING AND EXPANDING THE TARGET GROUP

Once you have found your target group and know their needs, keep in mind that, instead of it being a static structure, it is rather dynamic and flexible, meaning that you might need to rethink not only your offer but even the target group itself, as seen in the following examples.

Die Gute Stunde: Kultur im Dialog is a programme in Germany where, for instance, people who are prevented from attending cultural events, for example due to mobility impairments, can participate in cultural activities online and interact with other participants and artists. The programme was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic for older adults interested in art and culture but also focuses on people with reduced mobility. The target group was later expanded and now a special programme to people living with dementia is also being offered.

- **Website Die Gute Stunde: Kultur im Dialog**

Photo by: HumaQ

Another good practice example for expanding the target group is **Avocatnet.ro**, a Romanian online platform which provides a comprehensive legal advice. At first, the target group was lawyers to whom the platform provided information on Romanian legislation. However, over time the target group has been extended and the legal advice is now available to the general public. The Question and Answer (Q&A) section makes it easy for users to share their doubts and questions and receive help and recommendations to solve their problems. This example highlights the importance of rethinking the target group after implementing a practice and receiving positive feedback.

• **Website Avocatnet.ro**

"All parties must be heard and valued. The ideal would be to start any social intervention for change driven through the needs presented by the community. In this way the community will feel part of the social change and the intervention will be successful."

PROJECT MANAGER IN THE AREA OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING, PORTUGAL

DESIGNING WITH A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

DESIGN

Designing with a participatory approach:

• Design following a user-centred approach
• Offering different participatory options: online, in-person and a hybrid combination

Designing with a participatory approach means actively involving the target group throughout the development process. By including older adults as co-creators and co-designers, you tap into their wisdom and experiences, ensuring that the tools or services are user-friendly, intuitive, and cater to their specific needs.

This step includes conducting focus groups, usability testing, and involving older adults in the decision-making process. By valuing their input and incorporating their perspectives, you can create tools or services that are intuitive, accessible, and aligned with their needs and preferences.

DESIGNING FOLLOWING A USER-CENTRED APPROACH

Once you have identified your target group and its needs, it is time to think about the design of your practice. Many good practice examples show the success of a user-centred and participatory approach involving the target group in the process and ensuring their participation. It is important to go beyond an attractive and appealing design and include the end users in the development of your service or tool. Older adults form a large and heterogeneous group of the population, which must be included and actively involved in the process of change. Thus, a greater positive impact can be achieved with more people being aware of and taking action in relation to topics which are crucial and of social importance for the constantly changing society, such as digitalisation, inclusion and climate change. To increase the success of a service or tool, it is also important to ensure they are understood and are easy to use. Aspects that need to be considered among others are the usability of the solution by following a user-centred design for instance. Being clear about the purpose of the tool is essential, as can be seen in the following examples.

In this phase, user-centred design has shown positive results on the success of the practice. The Portuguese National Report mentioned Erasmus+ projects, such as **Hands-on SHAFE**, **BIG game**, **SDD**, **GreenerAge** and **TRIO** that adopted such a user-centred approach. This meant that they included the target groups from the participating countries (the Czeck Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the Netherlands) in the process of designing and developing the solutions.

Hands-on SHAFE provides a tool and informal training experiences to create digital and healthy living environments, including a section for those who want to start a business in this area. **BIG game** is a game designed to increase awareness of issues in these inclusive environments whereas **TRIO** and **GreenerAge** will provide digital, health and environmental and climate-change related content on their respective learning platforms. All these projects involved their respective target groups in the process of analysing, designing, and developing the tools provided. This can be achieved for example by holding workshops and performing assessments during the different phases of the process in order to understand the needs and wishes of the target groups. Additionally, in **SDD**, an educational game developed to raise awareness of discrimination and racism, the target group has also been actively involved in the creation process of the design by assessing the practice and sharing opinions and suggestions for improvement while testing the game. As a result, these projects provide real-life case-based stories and learning pathways to support learning. Results from the projects are then translated and made available in different European languages, which is important to make the content accessible to even more people.

- **Website Hands-on SHAFE** is available in English, Dutch, French, German, Polish and Portuguese.

Photo by: AFEdemy

- **Website BIG game** is available in English, Dutch, German, Polish and Portuguese.

Photo by: AFEdemy

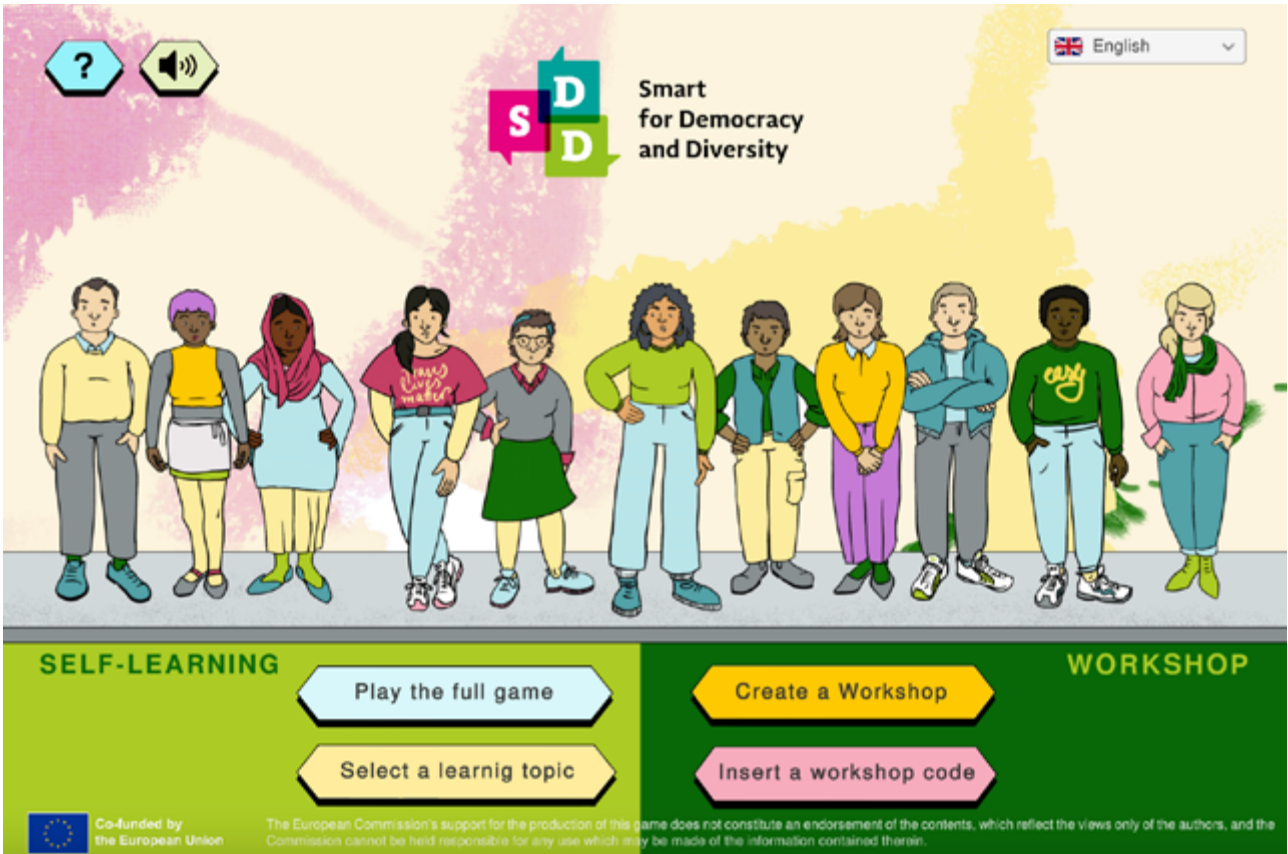- **Website SDD** is available in English, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Portuguese.

Photo by: SHINE 2Europe

- **Website GreenerAge** is available in English, Finish, Dutch, German, Polish and Portuguese.

Photo by: SHINE 2Europe

- **Website TRIO** is available in English, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish.

Photo by: SHINE 2Europe

"I would like to learn online and interactively in a group, to exchange ideas with others so that you don't get stuck alone. And I would like to have opportunities to exchange experiences about the practice. (...) learn new things on a regular basis, such as AI topics and applications, then I wouldn't have to look for it all on my own. It would be nice to have courses on current topics, where you can then 'spin and play around' with others and try out how to apply them.''

LEARNING GUIDE, GERMANY

OFFERING DIFFERENT PARTICIPATORY OPTIONS: ONLINE, IN-PERSON AND A HYBRID COMBINATION

Particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to think about whether to provide your tool and service in-person or online. Another option is to create a hybrid offer, combining in-person with online events.

An interesting example of a hybrid concept is an Austrian practice called **Vollpension** and **Backademie**. Vollpension is a coffee house concept where senior citizens bake cakes and can add to their often-modest pensions by selling their cakes. This creates a community atmosphere where participants can interact and

be socially active. It gives them an opportunity to pass on recipes, be active and socially connected. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Backademie was established, where information on recipes were and are still being transferred through online videos. Thanks to this knowledge sharing, an intergenerational exchange is being promoted.

- **Website Backademie**
- **Online baking courses**
- **Website Baking courses in the Vollpension Coffeehouse**

Photo by: Manuel Gruber

DigitalScouts

"There is a lack of awareness of the ease and usefulness of using electronic devices, of the introduction to the digital world and of the multitude of existing applications that can increase the quality of life with a 'click'. If they find out what benefits come with digital knowledge, they will want to learn."

POTENTIAL DIGITAL SCOUT, ROMANIA

DEVELOPING MEANING AND PURPOSE

PURPOSE

Developing meaning and purpose:

- Enabling intra- and intergenerational exchange
- Making digital knowledge transfer appealing and meaningful
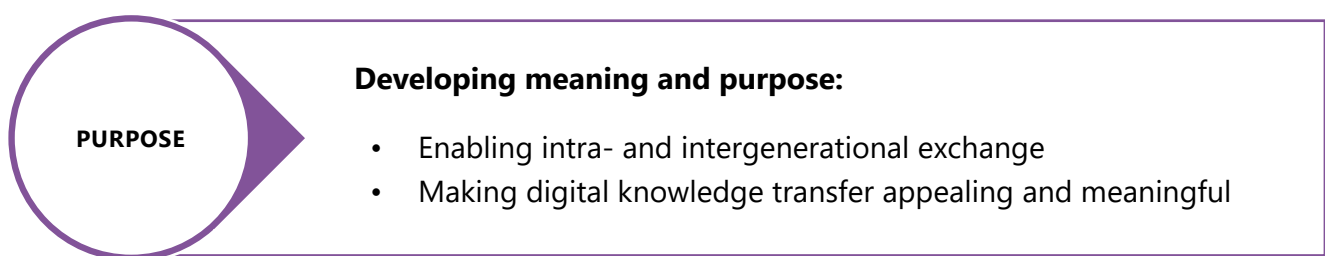
When promoting digital inclusion, it is important to develop tools or services that offer meaningful and purposeful experiences. Older adults should be able to see the value and relevance of digital technology in their lives. By aligning your offer with their interests, hobbies, and social connections, it is possible to demonstrate how technology can enhance their well-being, foster lifelong learning, and facilitate meaningful engagement with their communities. This step involves showcasing practical examples, success stories, and real-life applications to inspire and motivate a target group to embrace digital participation.

ENABLING INTRA- AND INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

By offering a social platform for older people, you provide them the opportunity to get in contact with people of similar age and exchange ideas and thoughts. Despite the age, it is important to remain socially active and maintain supported interaction and communication between them.

Vollpension and **Backademie** are good examples for creating an opportunity for older people to become or remain active and socially interact with people of similar age. They are also good practices of providing intergenerational exchange by not limiting the target group to older people but making the in-person events and online classes available for everyone. This way, people can freely join and have a fruitful interaction with one another.

As it can be observed in the practice presented here, it is important to note that even though it is of high importance to create a community of people with shared affinities, there is still the option of an intergenerational approach. Through it, an exchange between generations is enabled and it should be considered while thinking of the design of the offer.

- **Website Backademie**
- **Online baking courses**
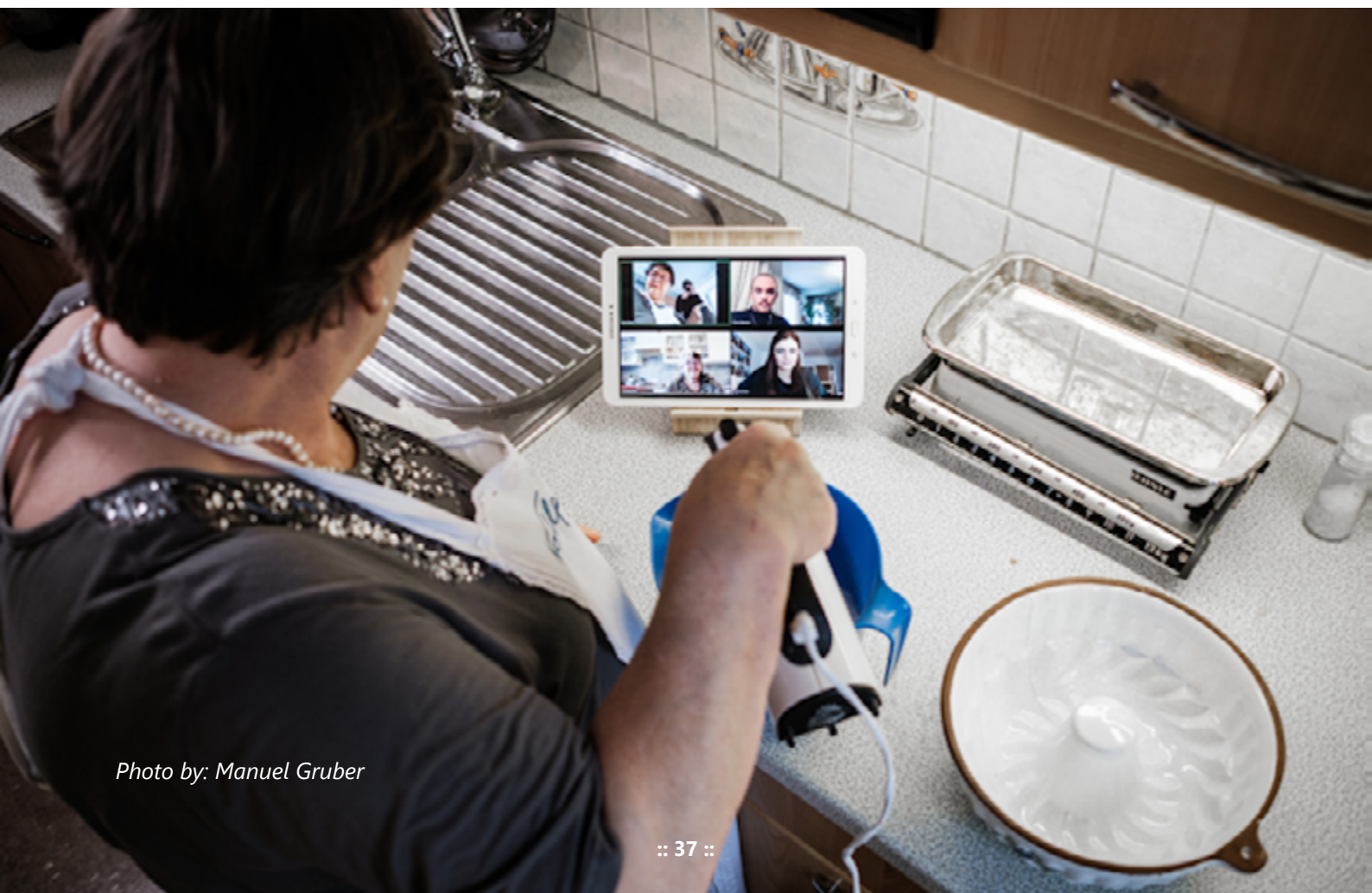- **Website Baking courses in the Vollpension Café**

Photo by: Manuel Gruber

DigitalScouts

MAKING DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER APPEALING AND MEANINGFUL

While passing on digital knowledge and dealing with cultural participation, it is important to make it appealing to the target group, so that your service or tool will reach, and be used by, many people who find it interesting and will most probably keep using it.

Having said this, the meaningful and relevant information on social and/or cultural developments provided should be embedded in an appealing format with a meaningful purpose while being fun and easy-to use at the same time. **Discover Culture** is an Austrian online platform offering virtual tours of cultural venues, such as museums across Austria and Germany, while following a gamification approach. Users can enjoy an interactive experience, such as interactive livestreams and books, chat functions and audio and video guides.

- **Website Discover Culture**

Photo by: Discover Culture

In Romania a service called **Super Lingo** with English-learning vocabulary games has been developed, providing cognitive training for older adults. By using a gamification approach, English skills are being transferred through this tool in a fun way while still passing on meaningful and useful knowledge to the users. The service is adapted to the needs of the users since the learning sets have been designed by a team of language, technology and dementia experts who have tested and refined the training package. The package is available at any time and can be freely chosen to match one's own learning pace.

- **Website Super Lingo**

The National Museum of Art of Romania combines online and offline offers to convey knowledge about its exhibitions. Offers include videos, audio descriptions and diagrams. It is important to include as many people as possible in the process of digitalisation and therefore to think further ahead and make the digital offer accessible to even more people by adding, for example, text-based descriptions.

- **Website of The National Museum of Art of Romania**

"I think this participation empowers older citizens and can give a new sense of self-confidence and independence and inclusion in today's world."

POTENTIAL DIGITAL SCOUT, PORTUGAL

EMPOWERING THE TARGET GROUP

EMPOWER

Empowering the target group:

- Empowering for social and digital participation

The empowerment of the target group is a core element of a good practice and involves equipping older adults with the necessary digital skills and knowledge to confidently navigate the digital landscape. This step includes offering digital literacy training programmes and support offers tailored to their needs, preferences, and learning styles. By providing accessible and comprehensive training, along with ongoing support, you can empower older adults to overcome any barriers or fears they may have and develop the confidence and empowerment to engage with digital technology, thus enhancing their independence, social connections, and overall quality of life.

EMPOWERING FOR SOCIAL AND DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

P5 Saúde Mental is a Portuguese website and **app for smartphone** used to promote mental health by emphasising that responsibility for one's own health lies with the individual. Therefore, they promote self-assessment, self-monitoring, tools for emotional management and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Enabling individual solutions rather than standardised ones, the approach implies that the change must come from the person concerned.

- **Website P5 Saúde Mental**
- **App for smartphone**

SeniorWeb is a private association in the Netherlands focusing on self-development and participation of older adults in the digital world. The association provides among others training courses and workshops for older adults through volunteers, who are often also seniors. The courses take place in the nearly 500 teaching locations across the country but are also available from home. This is a good example of a practice which empowers older people, giving them the tools needed to take action and become part of the solution.

- **Website SeniorWeb**

DigitalScouts

As already mentioned in the chapters above, **Participa.gov** from Portugal empowers citizens to have their voices heard, share their opinions by presenting proposals and being involved in voting for political decisions through an online platform.

- **Website Participa.gov**
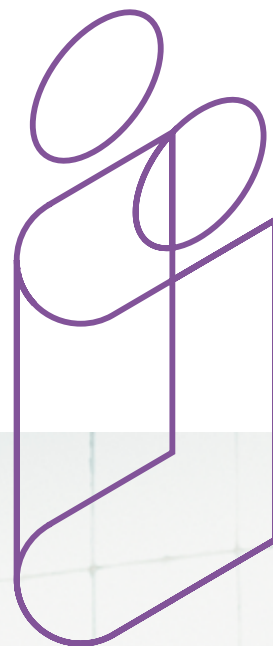
Just as in Portugal, Austria too has created an online service called **E-Government** facilitating political participation through a user-friendly tool to help sign documents and support consultations. This way political processes are accessible for everyone thus involving people with limited mobility and those living in isolated and rural areas in political processes. Thanks to this service, more citizens can be reached.

- **Website E-Government**

Another way of empowering your target group is to give them a platform where they can share their stories, which can be very powerful and create a sense of community. The EU project **Sharing Stories, Sharing Life**, mentioned in the Austrian National Report, uses storytelling as a method to combat loneliness among older people. An interesting fact about this practice is that it not only empowers older people to share their stories, but also provides tools for trainers to enable them to train participants properly.

The National Reports have also identified the need for, and importance of, training the trainers and teaching them soft skills, such as didactic and communication skills, that are crucial to transfer knowledge and reach the audience. This is in line with the aim of the **DigitalScouts** project.

- **Website Sharing Stories, Sharing Life**

Photos by: Projekt Sharing Stories – Erasmus

Furthermore, the previously mentioned website **Avocatnet.ro** is an example of empowering by providing information on a topic that is often very difficult to understand. The website also offers for free some services and information that people may otherwise not be able to afford.

- **Website Avocatnet.ro**

"I always tell my participants that they are all too young to say 'no I don't need this anymore'. When people plan to live a few more months, I feel digital education is part of it."

HEAD OF DIGITALE SENIOR:INNEN, AUSTRIA

ACCOMPANYING THE TARGET GROUP

ACCOMPANY

Accompanying the target group:

- Promoting community building and involvement
- Getting involved with a personal approach
- Providing technical support

Once you have gone through the other phases, accompanying is about creating a community for your target group. Accompanying the group involves providing ongoing support and assistance as they continue their journey towards digital inclusion. This step entails establishing support networks, helpdesks, or online communities where older adults can seek guidance and share experiences. By fostering a sense of community and peer support, you can create a supportive ecosystem that encourages continuous learning, fosters social connections, and addresses any challenges or concerns that may arise along the way.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY BUILDING AND INVOLVEMENT

By creating offers enabling people to meet up and attend social activities thus giving them an opportunity to interact with each other, a community is being developed that offers its members the possibility to gain a feeling of belonging.

From the example of **Movimento 55+ Associação** in Portugal, providing a social platform where older people can socially interact with each other can also help to combat loneliness and isolation as you integrate the target group in society through their own experiences. Movimento 55+ Associação provides community services, such as gardening, through the platform, and, therefore, promotes intra- and inter-generational relations. As it has already been mentioned, the benefits of a community can be expanded to an inter-generational level.

- **Website Movimento 55+ Associação**

Klup. B.V. is a Dutch platform enhancing the social network of older people by offering various social activities. This way, participants can enjoy exchanges and social interactions with one another and interconnect.

- **Website Klup. B.V.**

"The social aspect of supporting seniors in digital skills is very important. Make sure there is a nice atmosphere and provide something nice to eat and a cup of coffee for example.''

POTENTIAL DIGITAL SCOUT, THE NETHERLANDS

GETING INVOLVED WITH A PERSONAL APPROACH

Another way of accompanying the target group, users of your tool or participants of your offer, is to make them feel comfortable and welcomed. The German good practice **Oll Inklusiv** is a very good example of how to implement a personal approach in your offer. Oll Inklusiv aims to involve older people in cultural activities by providing activities such as visits to festivals and music clubs, as well as dance classes and visits to the cinema. The founder participates in the activities, greets and talks to the participants. This appears to be a good way of getting in contact with the participants and making them feel valued and welcomed. Our recommendation here would be that a personal approach be adopted by all the team members of the organisation for continuity purposes.

- **Website Oll Inklusiv**

PROVIDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT

When offering digital solutions, such as an online service or tool, digital literacy would be necessary. Because not everyone is digitally literate, you should consider providing technical support before and during your digital offer. This way, more people with a lower level of digital literacy are included in the digital offer and societal process of digitalisation since participants have the option to ask for help if needed. Some German practices, such as **Die Gute Stunde: Kultur im Dialog** and **Wege aus der Einsamkeit** meet this criterion and offer technical support to participants before and during online activities.

- **Website Die Gute Stunde: Kultur im Dialog**
- **Website Wege aus der Einsamkeit**
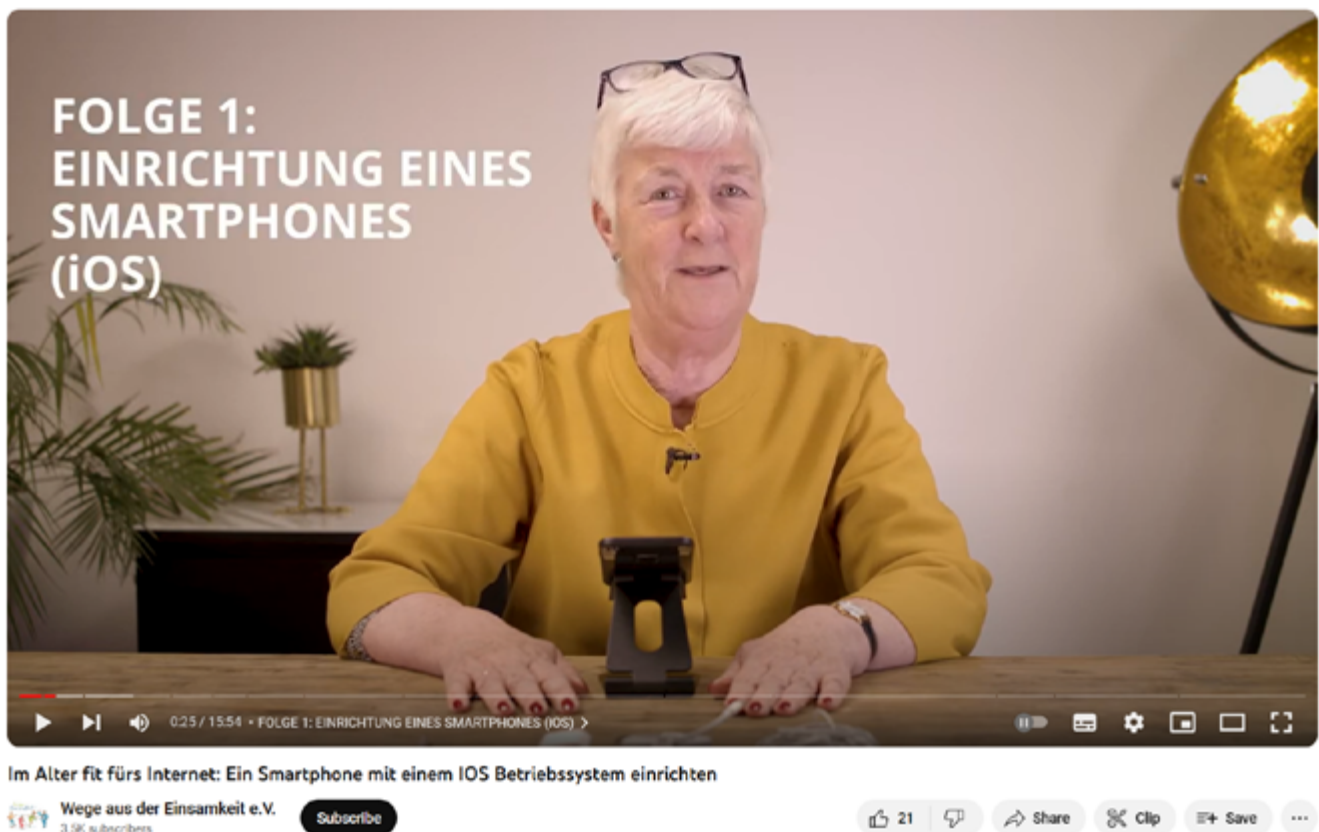
Photo by: YouTube channel of Wege aus der Einsamkeit

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"There is definitely a need to expand the learning offers for older people, because the number of older people who want to learn will increase, once they realise that digital skills training is absolutely necessary in a world that depends more and more on technology..."

SOCIAL WORKER, ROMANIA

BUILDING SOCIETAL IMPACT
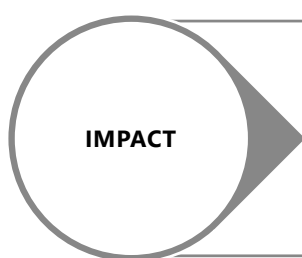
IMPACT

Building a societal impact:

- Fostering social innovation
- Encouraging a shift of mindset towards inclusiveness and diversity

The final step in successfully providing a tool or service for digital inclusion is to build societal impact. By promoting the benefits of digital participation among older adults and showcasing the transformative outcomes, stakeholders, policymakers, and the broader society can be inspired to recognise the importance of digital literacy and participation of seniors. This step involves advocating policy changes, fostering collaborations with key organisations, and sharing success stories and best practices to drive a larger-scale impact. By building societal awareness and commitment, you can create an inclusive and age-friendly digital environment that benefits diverse individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

FOSTERING SOCIAL INNOVATION

Challenging world-wide developments can be an opportunity for societal innovative ideas, as it can be seen in the following example. Some practices existed before the COVID-19 pandemic and were forced to redirect their approach. This was the case for **Vollpension** which first offered in-person cooking sessions as a coffeehouse concept in Vienna to provide an opportunity to exchange recipes and where participants could also sell their cakes. The knowledge was subsequently passed on online because Vollpension had to be closed during the pandemic. This is how **Backademie** was established.

- **Website Backademie**
- **Online baking courses**
- **Website Baking courses in the Vollpension Café**

Photo by: Manuel Gruber

ENCOURAGING A SHIFT OF MINDSET TOWARDS INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY

In order to achieve societal impact, societies mindset needs to shift towards inclusiveness and diversity. One way to achieve this goal is to raise awareness on relevant topics, dissolve stereotypes and make education and knowledge on societal relevant topics accessible to include as many people as possible in the process of change.

The main goal of this phase is to encourage the shift of society's mindset towards inclusiveness and diversity. Various Erasmus+ projects present valid approaches on how to reach that goal in the respective participating countries. Some of those good practices with an educational approach include **Hands-on SHAFE**, **BIG game**, **SDD**, **GreenerAge** and **TRIO** which transfer knowledge to the general public by providing accessible, free of charge and in different languages, learning platforms, training and guidelines on various topics in order to inform and raise awareness. For example, **SDD** is a game promoting inclusion and diversity with an educational and digital learning approach. It also

raises awareness on discrimination and creates interactive cases where players can find practical solutions and gain first-hand experience on the issue being worked on. The gaming approach provides users with a playful learning process about relevant societal topics.

- **Website Hands-on SHAFE** is available in English, Dutch, French, German, Polish and Portuguese.

- **Website BIG game** is available in English, Dutch, German, Polish and Portuguese.

- **Website SDD** is available in English, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Portuguese.

- **Website GreenerAge** is available in English, Finish, Dutch, German, Polish and Portuguese.

- **Website TRIO** is available in English, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish.

DigitalScouts
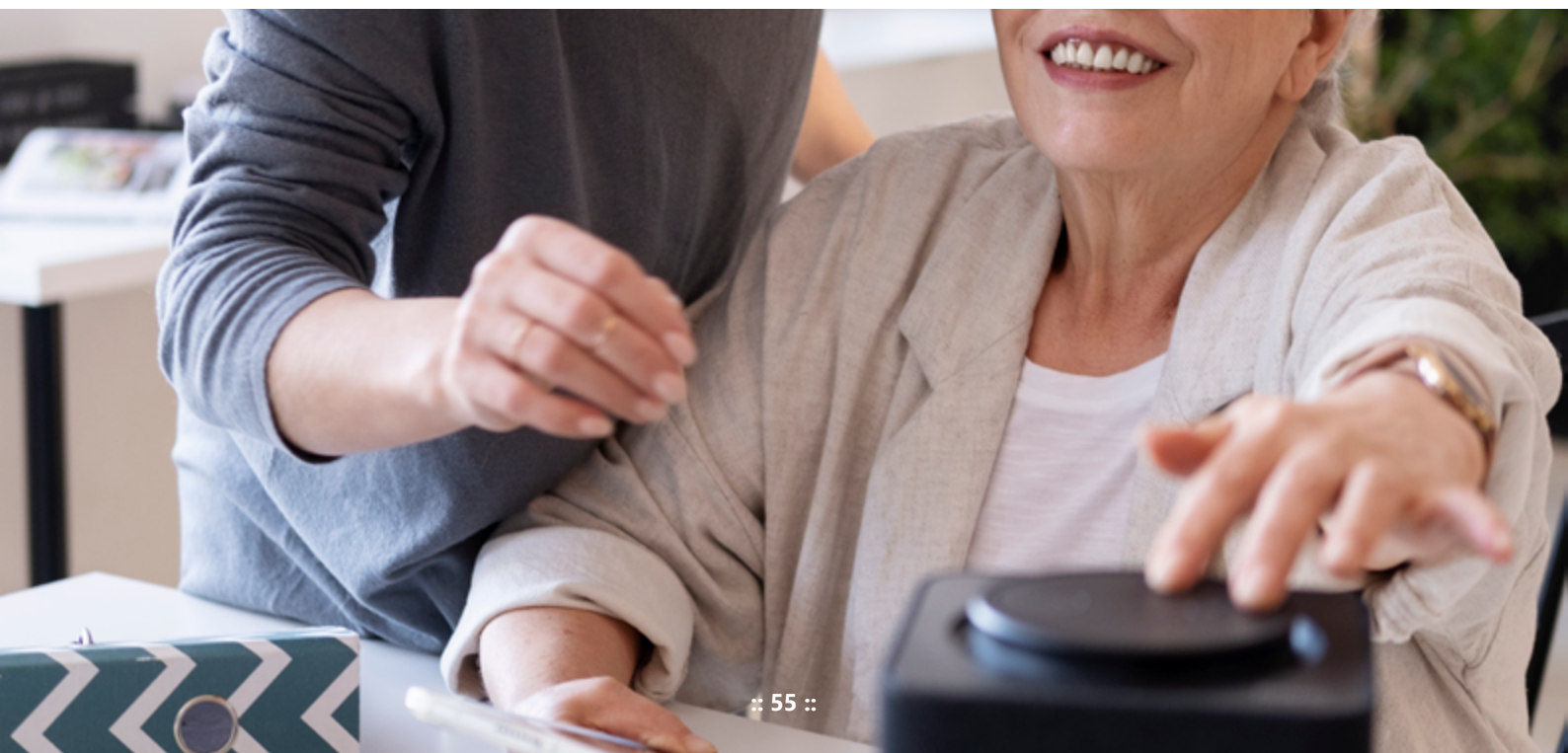
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapters presented an overview of the different phases you go through when developing a digital offer, service or tool to Enhance the Digital Literacy and Participation of People 60+: **identify the target group and its needs, design with a participatory approach, develop meaning and purpose, empower and accompany the target group and build a societal impact.**

This chapter provides recommendations and guidance on developing such a digital offer, service or tool. The six phases of offer development outlined earlier, the lessons that have been learned and the recommendations identified in the practical examples of good practices presented in the **DigitalScouts National Reports** are all based on the knowledge that has been gained. This is done with handouts that can also be used as cards (one for each of the phases described above). The aim of these cards is to transfer knowledge in a concise and easily understandable manner and to make the information more accessible and user-friendly.
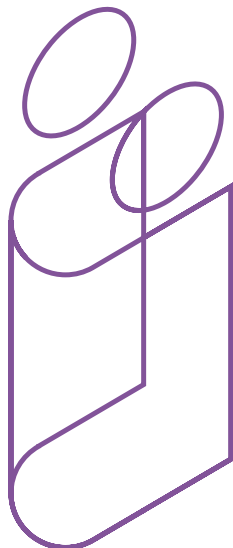
These cards can be used as follows:

Guided Development
It is important to identify in which phase you are currently in. The cards act as a roadmap. They can be used to identify the main aspects and the recommended steps to build a successful practice in the phase that the creation of your offer is currently in.

Tailored Measures
Each card will outline specific measures that are most relevant to that particular stage. By consulting the cards, you - as a developer or (potential) service provider - can take appropriate actions and apply relevant strategies aligned with the needs of that phase.

Inspiration from Good Practices
The cards include lessons learned from the examples given for each phase. These real-life examples can inspire creativity and innovation, helping developers to think beyond conventional solutions

Team Collaboration
The cards foster collaboration among team members. Each member can work on a specific phase and share their insights and progress with others. The cards become a shared reference point during meetings and discussions.

Overall, the cards are a valuable tool for anyone involved in developing the offer as they provide a structured and practical approach to create impactful digital offers, services or tools for Enhancing the Digital Literacy and Participation of people 60+. They help ensure that development efforts are well-guided, responsive to the target audience's needs, and have a positive impact on society.

IDENTIFY

IDENTIFING THE TARGET GROUP AND ITS NEEDS

This phase focuses on identifying and understanding the target group to whom your offer will be addressed. By engaging them in the process, using social media as a communication channel, and providing a platform for sharing opinions, you can effectively tailor your digital offer, service or tool and contain their scope for better engagement while ensuring a valuable proposition. Remaining open to new target groups expands outreach and accessibility.

Identify your target group:

• Get to know your target group and their needs and wishes.

Identify the needs of your target group:

• Address user's demand, needs and barriers based on direct consultation and involvement, instead of what you suppose would be important for them to have.
• Include your target group in the analysis and identification process, listen and facilitate the expression of their needs and challenges.

Reach your target group:

• Consider social media as a communication channel.
• Provide them with a tool they can use to share their opinions or relevant issues they are facing.
• Find a practical and meaningful purpose to make your proposition valuable for them.
• Connect participants, so they can be socially active and enlarge your network.

Rethink and expand the target group:

• Be open to new target groups with similar requirements.
• Expand your target group after receiving positive feedback, so that you can reach more people with a valuable and meaningful offer.
• Make your offer accessible to as many people as possible.

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DESIGN

DESIGN WITH A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Success in digital inclusion relies on a user-centred and participatory approach. Involve the target group, ensure comprehension and simplicity, and prioritize usability. Consider the heterogeneity of your target group members and offer different participatory options to accommodate diverse learning preferences and enhance digital learning experiences.

Follow a user-centred design approach:

- Apply a user-centred and participatory approach.
- Involve the target group in the process of developing the design.
- Ensure the service or tool is simple to use and understand.
- Consider the usability of the solution.
- Organise workshops and assessments during the development phase of the design.
- Translate the project results into other languages.

Offer different participatory option:

- Opt for a hybrid approach, combining in-person and online elements.

PURPOSE

DEVELOPING MEANING AND PURPOSE

In this phase, the focus is on exploring the preferences, likes and dislikes of the target group and enabling social connectivity by fostering intra- and inter-generational exchange. By offering an appealing way to tranfer digital knowledge, also through gamification and interactive experiences, you ensure engagement in meaningful interactions.

Enable intra- and inter-generational approach:

- Create an opportunity for older people to become and/or remain socially active.
- Consider the option of enabling inter-generational connection.

Transfer digital knowledge in an appealing and meaningful fashion:

- Make your offer appealing to the target group in order to reach them better.
- Create meaning and they will keep using it.
- Foster an interactive experience for users.
- Consider a gamification approach for your tool or service.

DigitalScouts

EMPOWER

EMPOWERING THE TARGET GROUP

Enabling trust and responsibility, this phase focuses on social and digital participation by providing tools for political, social, and cultural involvement, encouraging voicing opinions and motivating people to be proactive problem solvers.

Empower for social and digital participation:

- Consider an offer where people learn self-assessment and self-monitoring.
- Motivate people to take action and become part of the solution.
- Empower the target group to make their voices heard and share their opinion.
- Support them by providing tools, so that they can politically, socially, and culturally participate in society.
- Make proactive participation accessible to as many people as possible.
- Include rural and isolated areas in your offer/target group.
- Provide tools for trainers, so that they can train older people.

ACCOMPANY

ACCOMPANYING THE TARGET GROUP

Promote community building and involvement by embracing a personal approach and facilitating interactions among participants to foster a sense of belonging. Offer technical support to assist those with limited digital literacy.

Promote community building and involvement:

- Give participants the opportunity to interact with each other so that a community is built and its members gain a feeling of belonging.

Get involved with a personal approach:

- Make your target group feel welcomed and comfortable.
- Involve older people in cultural and social activities.
- Talk personally to your participants.

Provide technical support:

- Provide technical support before and during your offer or activity to include and support people with a lower level of digital literacy.

IMPACT

BUILDING A SOCIETAL IMPACT

Focused on fostering social innovation and the promotion of inclusiveness and diversity, this phase advocates for finding inventive ideas for your offer while embracing challenging developments as opportunities for creating relevant educational content for the target group. Continuous improvement is encouraged, as well as expanding the solution and target group to ensure sustained impact.

Foster social innovation:

- Find innovative ideas for your offer.
- See challenging developments in the world or your area of action as an opportunity to become creative and innovative.
- Consider offering not only in-person or online activities, but a combination of both.

Encourage a shift of mindset towards inclusiveness and diversity:

- Raise awareness about relevant topics for your target group.
- Offer educational content and knowledge relevant to your target group.

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