

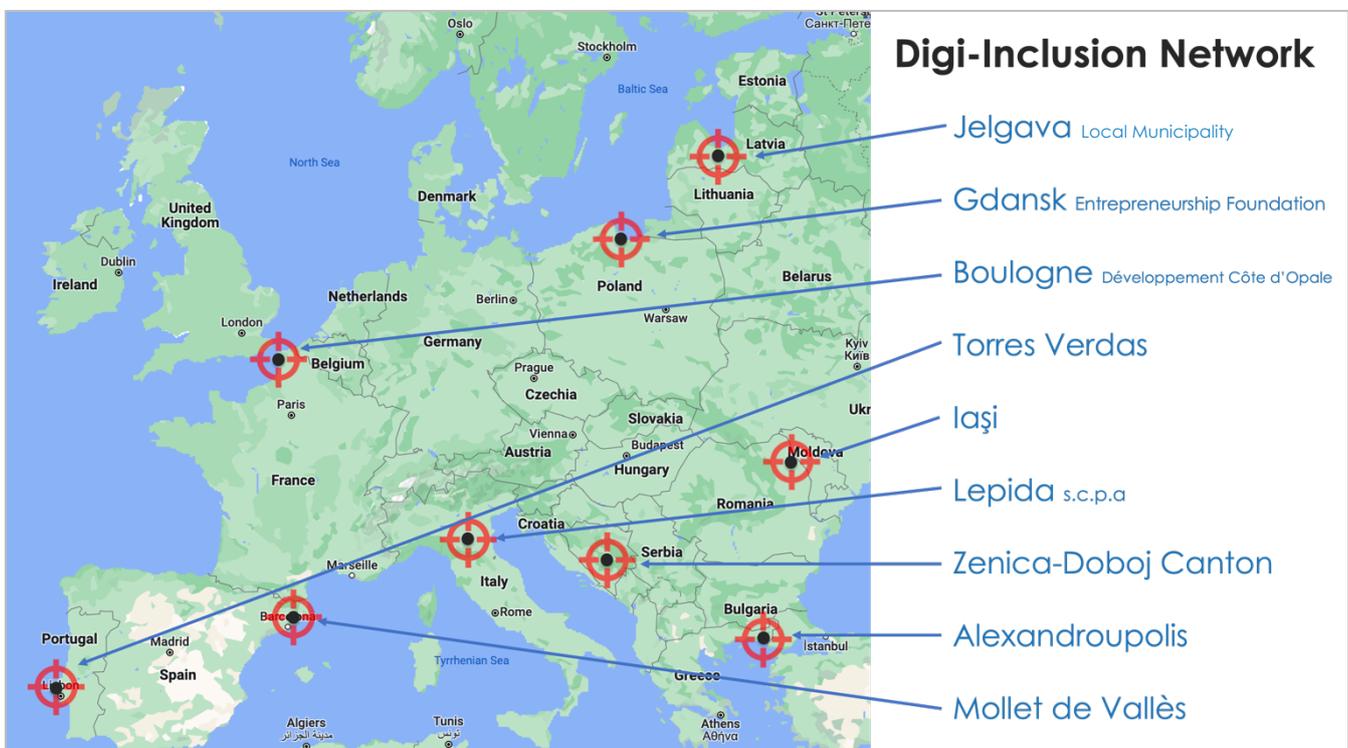
# Digi-Inclusion

Leaving no-one behind in a digital world



## The Network in 10 Pages...

The Digi-Inclusion Network consists of nine project partners (PPs) – five city/municipality partners and four non-city partners, whose locations are illustrated on the map below. There is geographical and cultural diversity to the partnership and it includes one partner from an IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) country.



Overall the network forms a strong partnership, with examples of good practice and thematic knowledge available from various PPs. The PPs are all well motivated and on the whole have a good understanding of the network theme following the network's Activation Phase.

There follows a *PP Profile on a Page* for each partner, concisely providing a view of the partner context, aims and areas of focus for Digi-Inclusion, notable strengths and opportunities, risks and threats and their local situation (ULG and political) and what they can offer to and take from the network exchange activities. These are based on a comprehensive and detailed city baselining visits, the full details of which are available in an Annex (for info, but not necessary to understand the network).

Ian Graham  
Lead Expert, Digi-Inclusion

# IAȘI (ROMANIA)

City Municipality

Population served: 290,422



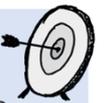
## Overview

Iași is a city at the centre of a metropolitan area of over 420,000 inhabitants. The economic centre of the Moldova Region, it is known as The Moldavian Capital and the Historical Capital of Romania.

- City is a **historical and cultural** centre, with an increasing touristic offer.
- Economy has shifted **away from heavy industry and agriculture** in recent years, creating unemployment and re-skilling challenges for the area.
- Rapidly **growing IT, tech and digital** sector, incentivised by the city, with large multinationals like Amazon attracting many skilled tech workers.
- A **“Young City”** – average age is 36 years.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



Iași is focussing on ensuring solidarity, inclusion and sustainability, through new approaches that improve lives of citizens. In terms of digital inclusion, this includes supporting older people and those with disabilities to access and use digital tools and services and developing public workers abilities to support this process.

Challenges identified include the lack of data and indicators available locally about digital exclusion, and a poor understanding amongst the local population and the target groups in particular, about the importance of the use of digital devices and services to maintain their societal inclusion and participation.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ **Political support** for addressing digital exclusion
- ✓ Good range of **local tech skills and private companies** in located in the city to potentially draw upon
- ✓ URBACT presents a new way of working - Opportunity to capitalise on the use of new **participatory methods** and tools



## Threats & Risks

- Lack of **data and information** locally about who is digitally excluded
- **Administrative barriers** to the active use of dynamic and participative methods and tools for local planning and engagement

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Iași are building a new ULG comprising stakeholders that have not traditionally worked together or engaged with the municipality in this way. The aim to build on local expertise and knowledge to support the project.

Target groups for digital support include the older people and people with disabilities.

Political support for digital inclusion is established and the vice-deputy of the municipality is actively engaged and supportive of the project.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

Iași city municipality wish to learn from peers, by identifying good practices, see and hear about inspiring projects, and find new methods and tools to use for tackling digital exclusion.

Iași are specifically looking to understand and get support with using the **URBACT method** at local level, particularly in relation to participative working with stakeholders, which is a new approach.

# Jelgava Local Municipality (LATVIA)

Local Municipality (rural municipality surrounding the central city)

Population served: 34,069



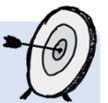
## Overview

Jelgava Local Municipality (JLM) is a mainly rural municipality, which surrounds the city of Jelgava. Situated just 42km from Riga, JLM comprises 16 parishes including 40 villages from 40 to 4500 inhabitants. More than 30% of the territory is covered by forests and 55% is fertile agricultural land.

- Population shrinking due to negative natural growth and emigration, especially to Riga.
- Jelgava *city* is an industrial (manufacturing) city, but the main industries of JLM are crop production, mining and processing of minerals, peat and wood
- Transport infrastructure considered of critical importance due to the rural nature of the area.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



“Digital + Social = Equality” is JLM’s tag line for this project. They will have a focus bringing together knowledge, skills, opportunities and commitment to develop support for digital skills development that is sustainable in the long term. Increasing structural use of volunteers is also seen as a key part of the solution.

Challenges identified include a lack of equal infrastructure across JLM, motivational issues in the population as well as issues with access being a rural area. Digital skills within the municipality also potentially are in need of improving, to help support citizens better.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Established Customer Service Centres and life-long learning centres across JLM
- ✓ Strong political support
- ✓ National Digital Strategy for Latvia – provides strong context and support



## Threats & Risks

- **Declining population** over time
- **Brain drain** of young people and (digitally) skilled workers to Riga
- <=50% workers need **retraining** by 2025
- Digital **infrastructure** could limit the possibilities for solutions

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, JLM’s ULG is well developed with a range of stakeholders from citizen groups, municipal departments, life-long learning centres, NGOs, and the local University.

Target groups include the elderly and those with disabilities, as well as those in need of re-skilling with digital skills to find (new) work opportunities.

Political support for digital inclusion and the Digi-Inclusion network is strong, with the vice-chairman of the municipality actively involved and highly supportive.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

JLM have participated in URBACT previously and are looking to learn from peers about experiences in tackling the digital divide, shifting focus from purely digital transition to digital inclusion.

JLM can also offer sharing experience of using URBACT tools and methods in small municipalities with other PPs.

# Lepida (Bologna & Emilia-Romagna, ITALY)



Consortial Company (funded by Emilia-Romagna Region)

Population served (in metropolitan city): 1,012,000

## Overview

Lepida is a subsidiary of the Regional authority of Emilia-Romagna. Based in Bologna with infrastructures in the region, it delivers digital projects to its members at regional level, including the Bologna metro area with its 56 municipalities.

- Economically **prosperous** metro area, large student population, low unemployment.
- Tourism a notable part of the economy of the city.
- Contrast with the **rural surroundings** of the region: job prospects & skills are lower in mountainous rural areas; some towns and villages are in decline.
- **Diverse regional economy** with retail, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture all prevalent.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



Lepida's focus is on ensuring more sustainability of digital inclusion measures in the longer term, and creating lasting engagement from people who are newly digitally enabled.

They are developing a vision where there are equal opportunities to access digital services, active participation of all citizens in the digital society, and everyone can use technology for their needs. Challenges identified include fear of digital tools and applications among the local population, cost barriers to access, and burnout of those who provide support and training to others.

## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Regional **digital strategy**, with digital inclusion built in
- ✓ Well established stakeholder **network**, incl. good links with schools and adult education institutions and NGOs
- ✓ Opportunities to build on previous successful projects using **intergenerational facilitation** for older people

## Threats & Risks

- Limited **resources preventing scaling** of good and proven initiatives
- Large geographical and contextual remit could mean focus is too thinly spread

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Lepida's ULG is broad and well developed, with a mix of public bodies, social sector, NGOs and private organisations. It one of two PPs where the municipality is an *external* stakeholder, not the project lead.

Target groups include the elderly, immigrants (especially women) and rural/mountain communities.

Political support for digital inclusion is well established with Regional Digital Agenda, the Innovation and digital sector of the City of Bologna, the education, digital and social sectors of the Metropolitan City actively engaged and supportive.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

Lepida have a **long track record** of delivering digital projects which already have a strong inclusion angle – many of these can serve as **inspiration** to other network partners as ideas or existing good practices.

Lepida are specifically looking to gain insights and support with the **URBACT method** and support, and are hoping to create a more **sustainable model** for their inclusion work as a result.

# Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation (POLAND)

Non-Governmental Organisation (founded by City of Gdańsk)

Population served: 486,345



## Overview

The Foundation's aim is supporting the City of Gdansk in economic development, including promotion and educational activities in the field of entrepreneurship. The Foundation's council includes representatives of city hall incl. Deputy Mayor for Entrepreneurship and Climate Protection and various city hall departments.

- Gdańsk is a centre of maritime economy, one of the largest commercial ports in the Baltic Sea.
- Other main sectors of the city's economy include IT, shared service centres, tourism, and logistics.
- Capital of Pomeranian Voivodeship and with nearby cities Sopot and Gdynia forms metro area "Tricity".
- The city has a low unemployment rate (2.3%).



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



Gdańsk is focusing on extending and improving the city's digital service offer to make it more inclusive. It wants to look at the factors that influence citizens' lack of motivation to use digital services. At the same time, it is aware of the dangers of technology dependency.

They are developing a vision of a city in 2030 where every citizen has full and equal access to all, well-designed, public digital services and has the competences to use them. Challenges they have identified include a lack of detailed data on the nature and extent of digital exclusion of particular groups of residents.

## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Opportunity to embed Digital Inclusion principles into the Digital Strategy for the city that is being developed
- ✓ Opportunity to explore with universities how to measure the digital divide
- ✓ Municipal policy of "City of Equality"

## Threats & Risks

- no detailed data on the scale of digital exclusion in the city
- Low availability of staff resources for implement actions in a situation of very rapid technological change
- Awareness of the benefits of digital not widespread in city-led institutions

## Digi-Inclusion Local

Gdańsk has a ULG focussed around the city municipality including social and technical departments, plus a mix of business and NGO. It's one of two PPs where the municipality is an *external* stakeholder, not the project lead.

Areas of focus include digital municipal services and the citizens who struggle to access those.

Support for the project is via high-ranking city officials, although there are some things to work out to link the project properly to the City's new digital strategy.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

Gdańsk wish to hear good practices and learn from peers to help strengthen the competence of officials in preparing and implementing inclusive digital projects. The project team and ULG members have experience in using URBACT methods and tools that can be helpful to other PPs.

They specifically wish to understand how to best integrate digital inclusion into a new digital transition strategy at city level.

# Zenica-Doboj Canton (BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA)

Regional Authority - Department for Development and International Projects

Population served: 355,000



## Overview

Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDC) represents one of the leading industrial regions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of 12 administrative units (9 municipalities and 3 cities). The Canton consists of both urban and rural areas. Zenica, the largest city in the Canton, is a significant urban center with a diverse population.

- Industrial economy, including coal mining, steelworks, metallurgy, manufacturing, agriculture, and services.
- Rich cultural heritage, with influences from various ethnic and religious groups.
- High unemployment (38%).
- Contrast between urban centres and rural areas.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



ZDC's focus is on supporting the development of rural populations with digital skills and access, including broadband infrastructure, digital literacy programs, access to affordable digital devices, establishing community hubs, integrating digital education in schools, and conducting awareness campaigns.

The region is developing a vision where users embrace digital inclusion as a crucial aspect of education and personal development, with a public administration that provides a wide range of digital services. Challenges identified include highly rural areas with limited or no digital infrastructure and limited economic means.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Diverse and engaged **local stakeholders** and a motivated project team
- ✓ **Knowledge exchange** with EU cities provides extensive opportunities for new ideas and inspiration for actions



## Threats & Risks

- Low economic and educational levels in many parts of the population
- ZDC is new to URBACT and to these types of participative working programmes
- Resistance to change

## Digi-Inclusion Local

ZDC's ULG is well engaged, with numerous regional actors already involved in social initiatives in related fields.

Target groups include woman entrepreneurs, particularly those living in rural communities who have failed to keep pace with digitisation.

Political support for digital inclusion is via the Secretary of Department for Development and International Projects of ZDC who is supportive of the project and can also obtain further political support if needed.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

ZDC has a unique position being a region in an IPA country and this provides both opportunities for interesting exchange with EU PPs and for rich learning for ZDC and their local stakeholder.

ZDC is specifically looking to learn about and apply URBACT methodology regionally and to learn from partners about their experience of digitisation and including everyone in that.

# Boulogne-sur-Mer Développement Côte d'Opale (FRANCE)



Urban planning, Economic development and marketing agency (arrondissement/district level)

Population served: 157,654

## Overview

Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale is the development agency for the arrondissement of Boulogne-sur-mer, an administrative area comprising the coastal city and major port of Boulogne and other surrounding rural and semi-rural areas, including coastline designated a "Grand Site National."

- Big focus on Blue Economy, most important fishing port in France, including significant food processing and notable marine science companies
- Tourism is a key part of the economy, especially along the coastal areas.
- Unemployment (8%) still slightly above French average but has fallen significantly in recent years.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



Boulogne's focus is on offering people training and workshops to acquire the skills to benefit from digital opportunities. This includes raising awareness and providing support for local (non-digitised) businesses.

They are developing a vision where everybody is confident and has skills in using digital tools and services. Challenges identified include a lack of knowledge of the digital divide amongst professionals, and a lack of knowledge amongst local residents and businesses about the digital offer and support available. Motivation of people to engage digitally is also a factor to be addressed.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Local Community and Social Centre network, including digital facilitators employed to provide support
- ✓ Good infrastructure and internet coverage
- ✓ Existing collaborations can be built upon



## Threats & Risks

- Rapid digital transition is widening the digital divide
- Rural populations can be harder to reach / work with
- Target groups not adapted to standard forms of communication
- no clear overview of available digital support (across the territory)

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Boulogne's ULG has stakeholders that are engaged in the project and come from a range of sectors and work well together.

Target groups from the project include the elderly and non-digitised local businesses who are falling behind with digitisation and therefore risk their future livelihoods.

Political support for digital inclusion is good elected member for digital strategy is highly supportive and is an active member of the ULG.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale has experience of digital projects and can particularly share expertise in providing structured digital training and facilitation/coaching services to residents.

They are specifically looking to learn with peers on how to build better diagnostic capabilities (to understand the digital divide at local level) and to create more sustainable models for providing local digital support.

# Mollet del Vallès (Catalunya, SPAIN)



City Municipality

Population served: 51,294

## Overview

Mollet del Vallès is a medium city in the Barcelona province and comprises a dense urban area of the city and the rural area of Gallecs which covers around half the territory. The cities proximity to Barcelona is a key factor in its historical development and current profile.

- Property prices rising due to migration from Barcelona as cheaper but with good transport links.
- Trade, transport, hospitality and services currently account for 80% of the local economy.
- Similar unemployment figure to Barcelona Province in general but lower average salaries.
- The Gallecs area is one of the last reserves of rural space in the metro region of Barcelona.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



Mollet's focus is on tackling all three digital divides in a holistic and human-centred way, allowing citizens to capitalise on their knowledge and access to get the best value from the digital world. This might include training & skills development, use of volunteers for support, hiring digital facilitators, and combining resources of local stakeholders.

They are developing a vision of a digitally inclusive Mollet del Vallès with an empowered citizenship that has equitable access to all existent digital opportunities. Challenges identified include lack of data about the local divides, too few human and economic resources, and also lacking an in-house expert on the digital divide.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Existing programmes exist, e.g. neighbourhood plans
- ✓ Digital Agenda for Catalan municipalities (strategy)
- ✓ Strong network of local associations and volunteers
- ✓ Open access to wi-fi in public buildings and parks



## Threats & Risks

- The high rate of digital transformation
- Limited funding to reduce the digital divide
- People don't want to engage digitally
- People facing digital divide face other divides e.g. economic, social (multiple needs)

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Mollet's ULG is well developed with a good range of municipal and external stakeholders from a variety of disciplines. Furthermore, it also includes regional public entities

Target groups include elderly people, migrants, those needing to reskill for employment, young people.

Political commitment for digital inclusion is strong with the mayor and several elected members actively involved in the project and providing support. Moreover, elected officials decided to set up the Digi-Inclusion network.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

The city has specific experience in managing volunteer facilitators for digital training and coaching as well as methods for identifying digital exclusion via social services. The network of civic and elderly people centres is also of interest.

Mollet is specifically looking to gain insights that help foresee future digital exclusion problems, and to identify existing good practices to reduce digital exclusion.

# Alexandroupolis (GREECE)

City Municipality

Population served: 71,601



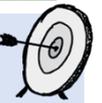
## Overview

Alexandroupolis is a coastal city 40km from the border with Turkey. The municipality covers the central urban area of the city and various local peri-urban communities (small towns and villages). It has a port, airport and key road connections, as well as rail and has various historical and cultural aspects.

- Service economy - 80% employed in **tertiary sector**
- A **“portal” city** to/from the Eastern Mediterranean due to the transport infrastructure.
- Largest age group is **25-39 year olds**.
- Tourism seen as an increasingly important market to be developed.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



The city of Alexandroupolis has a focus on supporting specific groups of citizens to improve their skills to use the digital services available. Local traders also need support to digitise their business and keep pace with changes, to ensure they stay viability and provide sustainable trading income.

Challenges identified include target groups who are not that easy to approach and the lack of good internet provision outside of the urban centre of the municipality.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Local members association “Technology Association of Thrace” a key local asset for digital promotion and inclusion
- ✓ Opportunity to build digital inclusion into the new digital strategy



## Threats & Risks

- shortage of municipal funding
- lack of initiatives for citizens in order for them to keep up with the procedures of the project

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Alexandroupolis’s ULG is emerging but can be built around strong local actors who can be given space and support to develop actions as part of the IAP.

Target groups for support include elderly people, less educated unemployed migrant groups (particularly muslim groups) and municipal workers.

Political support for digital inclusion is high, via the General Secretary of the municipality who is actively involved and supports the project, alongside the mayor.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

The Tech Association of Thrace is an interesting example of ground-up action that will be interesting to the network.

Alexandroupolis wishes to develop local skills in the participatory working and in actively using URBACT tools and methods for municipal staff to develop local IAPs themselves and create local ownership of actions and local buy-in for implementation.

# Torres Vedras (PORTUGAL)

City Municipality

Population served: 83,072



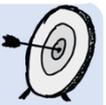
## Overview

Torres Vedras is a **mid-sized municipality**, 40km north of Lisbon and situated in the Portugal littoral Atlantic line, which has higher economic indices and population density compared to the interior country. The municipality comprises 13 parishes, including the City of Torres Vedras (33% of the population) and other coastal and rural parishes.

- The City has the majority of the social and cultural infrastructures and activity of the municipality.
- Tertiary sector makes up 68.5% local economy.
- Unemployment is 6.1% (below 8.1% national rate).
- Proximity to capital and other cities in the region plays an important economic and social role.



## Digi-Inclusion Aims



The focus for Torres Vedras is in creating equal opportunities and having a new perspective on social inclusion. This includes putting the digital divide as an all-inclusive concept in local policies and strategies.

The municipality is developing a vision where all local citizens are digitally included, having access, skills and the capacity to engage with the digital world to improve their wellbeing and quality of life. Challenges that exist include that the citizens are not fully aware that being digital engaged / included is a priority in their lives to be a full part of society.



## Strengths, Existing Practices & Opportunities

- ✓ Intergenerational projects and activities and young digital volunteers
- ✓ Used to dealing with the rural/urban "tension"
- ✓ Data from new survey on accessing digital services, could enable better targeting of actions / interventions



## Threats & Risks

- Overstretched human and financial resources might limit possibilities
- Policy priorities are not yet aligned to digital inclusion
- Target audience may not be motivated to participate

## Digi-Inclusion Local

At local level, Torres Vedras' ULG is a newly established group, including a selection of local NGOs, municipal departments and a social incubator.

Target groups include vulnerable groups including older people, those excluded from employment, and those internally within the municipality who lack digital skills.

Political support for digital inclusion is good, with the council Vice-president (responsible for the social division) actively supportive of the project.

## Digi-Inclusion Transnational

Torres Vedras has a wide range of existing inclusion programs developed by ULG members and the local Social Incubator has been working on social impact KPIs and this would be interesting to network partners.

The municipality is specifically looking to gain insights into working with the URBACT method and to exchange on how to deliver sustainable digital inclusion that is embedded and mainstreamed.