Digi-Inclusion Urbact network

Communications Practice

Introduction

How we communicate about digital exclusion is a critical element of making progress towards tackling it. The words, tone and framing we use shape how people understand the issue and how they engage with it.

Good and effective communication adds value in raising public awareness of and sensitivity to the issues of digital exclusion. It can also support progress towards the ecosystem approach recommended by the Digi-inclusion Playbook, by engaging the full range of stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of the issues at play and the importance of taking collective and coordinated action appropriate to the role and capacities of each.

As has been seen and discussed throughout the lifetime of the Digi-inclusion network, the topic of digital exclusion can easily be misunderstood or oversimplified. Without careful communication, it risks being seen as a niche, technical problem, or as an individual shortcoming - something that happens to 'other people'.

But the way we talk and communicate about it has the power to shift perceptions: from a marginal concern to a mainstream social challenge; from a matter of personal responsibility to one of shared concern. When it's communicated with clarity and humanity, people recognise themselves, their communities, and the systems they're part of. It becomes something that everyone has a stake in.

The Network has developed and shared a variety of approaches to communicating about digital exclusion which provide lessons to others working in this area. In this document, we capture a selection of particularly inspiring examples at both network level and local level.

Contents

A. Network-Level Communication

The Digi-inclusion network has developed a number of communications approaches at network level to support its aims and ambitions of helping cities to tackle digital exclusion at local level. Inspiration can be taken from the following categories of activity.

A.i. Digi-inclusion Playbook and related tools

The Digi-inclusion Playbook is the key knowledge output of the network, guiding local authorities and stakeholders through a series of 'plays' for strengthening and improving the way they tackle digital exclusion. As a tool for enhancing shared understanding of digital exclusion and new ways of thinking about and addressing this societal challenge, the playbook is, at its heart, a communications tool. It does not just hold knowledge, but seeks to share it and foster behaviour change.

Figure 1: The Digi-inclusion playbook - front cover

The Wave of Digitalisation tool generated by the network provides a useful visual tool that any local authority can use to communicate more clearly about digital exclusion.
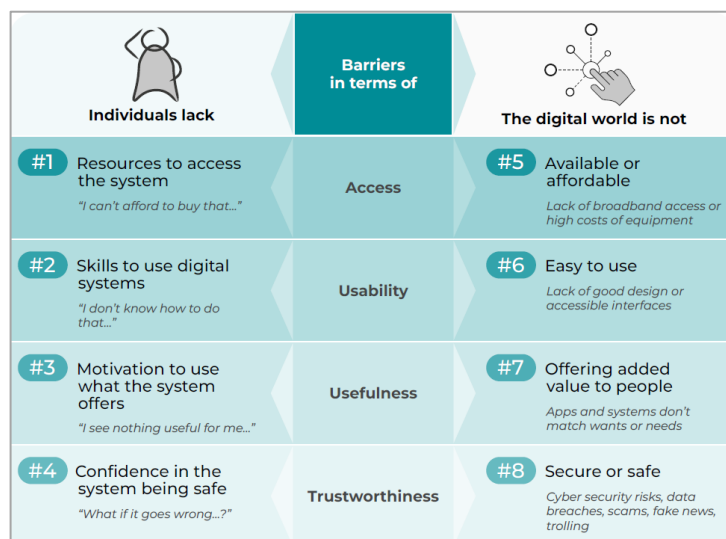
Figure 2: The Wave of Digitalisation
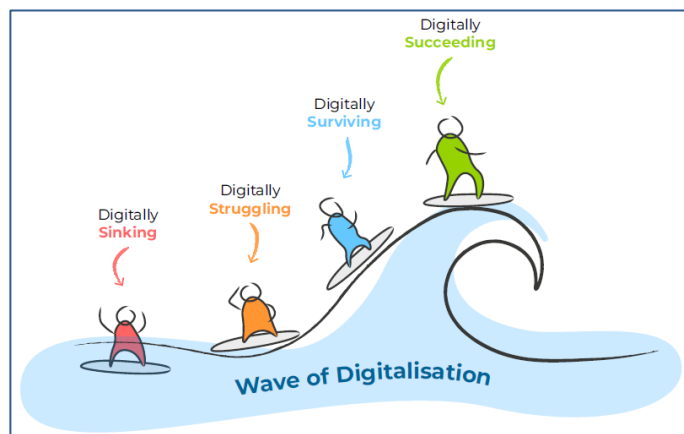
The wave can support local conversations and understanding about the fact that digital exclusion is not a 'black and white' phenomenon, but happens across a spectrum of individual experiences in a constantly changing digital environment. This can be fundamental in generating stakeholder engagement around the topic and public understanding of it.

The 8 causes matrix is also a valuable communications tool in supporting understanding of how solutions for digital exclusion can be designed.

As a simple visual representation of a complex phenomenon, it supports understanding of the different potential barriers that can be causing digital exclusion and, therefore, where efforts need to be focused to overcome them and support inclusion.

Figure 3: The 8 causes matrix

Individuals lack	Barriers in terms of	The digital world is not
#1 Resources to access the system *"I can't afford to buy that..."*	Access	#5 Available or affordable *Lack of broadband access or high costs of equipment*
#2 Skills to use digital systems *"I don't know how to do that..."*	Usability	#6 Easy to use *Lack of good design or accessible interfaces*
#3 Motivation to use what the system offers *"I see nothing useful for me..."*	Usefulness	#7 Offering added value to people *Apps and systems don't match wants or needs*
#4 Confidence in the system being safe *"What if it goes wrong...?"*	Trustworthiness	#8 Secure or safe *Cyber security risks, data breaches, scams, fake news, trolling*

A.ii.   Political declaration

The political declaration signed by network partners in the partner city of Iasi, Romania in September 2024 is another output that has an important communications function, alongside its other role. Its importance is not just as a representation of a shared political commitment. The document helps communicate the importance of the topic for cities and understanding of how digital exclusion affects local people and what can be done to overcome it.

As explained by Silvia Silva, Head of the Social Development Office of Torres Vedras, Portugal. "By signing this declaration, it means there is a political commitment [to] digital inclusion. It is also a public assumption of its importance in our municipality and an opportunity to develop this international network and to continue this work, spreading it to other municipalities also."

Figure 4: Political representatives of Digi-inclusion network partners signed a joint declaration in Iasi on 24 September 2024.

See also a video of: Partner reflections on the political declaration

A.iii.   Video Journals

The Network coordinators (Lead Partner and Lead Expert) took the decision to create each Network Journal using a collection of short engaging videos, rather than as a written report. This approach sought to provide a more accessible format for communicating key messages about both the network journey and the key content messages and lessons emerging from the network. Journals include a range of content styles, from reflections to camera, to PP interviews, to summaries of TNM activities.

Figure 5: Video journals captured activities, progress and messages of the network

The network video journals were recorded and presented by Lead Expert Ian Graham, using an informal presentation style that invites the viewer to follow the network's journey and story in an open and welcoming way. Whilst the content is serious, the informal style aims to be inclusive, rather than intimidating, inviting viewers to join the conversations around digital exclusion and to feel that this is a topic for them - not just specialist 'experts'.

Available as YouTube Playlists, the journal videos have also been added to an embedded site in the URBACT Network page using Genially to combine them with other related media, including articles and pictures. This has allowed the network to build up a picture of the learning and activities over the lifetime of the project, structured into five areas: i) Digi Inclusion essentials; ii) Exchange and learning round up; iii) ULG Corner; iv) Stories of Digi Inclusion; and v) Quarterly spotlight.

Figure 6: Network Lead Expert Ian Graham introducing the first edition of the Network Journal

All editions of the Digi-inclusion Network journal, created and hosted by lead Expert Ian Graham can be viewed through the following links:

- Digi-inclusion Network Journal #1
- Digi-Inclusion Network Journal #2
- Digi-inclusion Network Journal #3
- Digi-inclusion Network Journal #4
- Digi-inclusion Network Journal #5
- Digi-inclusion Network Journal #6

*Figure 7: Network videos are easy to share via social media platforms such as LinkedIn*
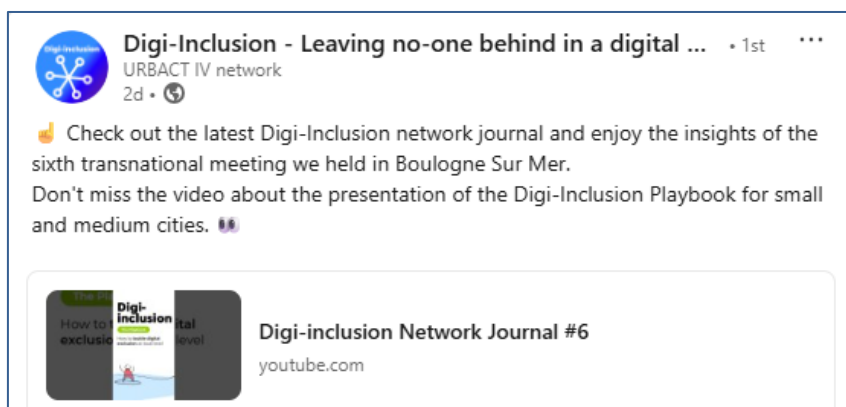
The more dynamic style of the video journal has supported dissemination of the key messages through various platforms, including the posting of videos on YouTube and the sharing of whole videos and parts of videos via the network's social media channels, most notably LinkedIn.

A.iv.   Video explainers

The network has also produced short video explainers of key concepts. These were often produced and disseminated as part of the network journal, but are also useful standalone products which can be used to communicate complex topics more clearly to target audiences across Europe.

As with the network journal, the approach taken by the network was to communicate in a relatively informal and open style to make the content as accessible as possible. Approaches to these video explainers included both more traditional 'presentation-style' explanation of topics as well as 'interview format' discussions of key and complex topics.

Figure 8: Network Lead Expert Ian Graham provides a video explainer of the wave of digitalisation
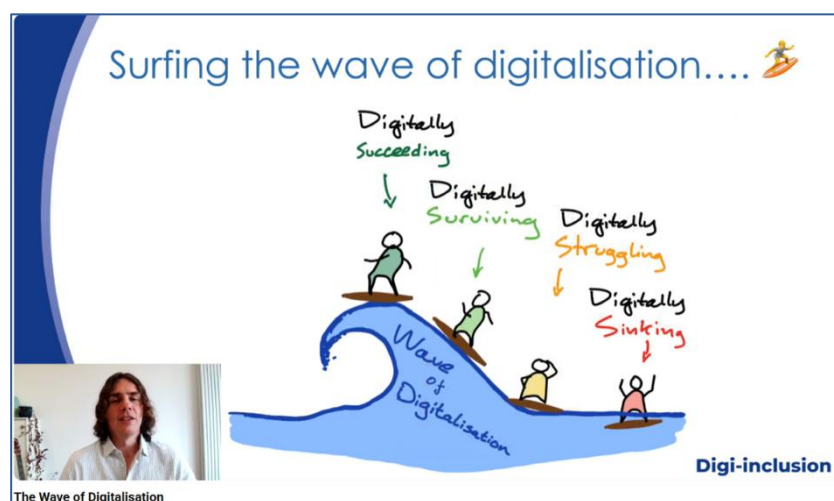
An example of the 'presentation-style' video explainer is where Lead Expert Ian Graham introduced and explained the network's key emerging concept for understanding digital exclusion at local level: Surfing the Wave of Digitisation.

Figure 9: Network experts Ian Graham and Ed Thorpe explain key content of the evolving Playbook in a recorded discussion.

An example of the interview format was where a recording was made of Lead Expert Ian Graham and Ad Hoc Expert Ed Thorpe discussing key message from the network's principle output: What's in the playbook?

This interview/discussion format allowed a natural presentation of complex topics, that can be difficult to capture in writing. This recorded conversation can then work as a crucial support for enabling external audiences to understand the Playbook and its potential relevance to their local context.

A.v.   Partner reflections & interviews

Figure 10: The Network regularly captured partner insights on key topics for Digi-inclusion
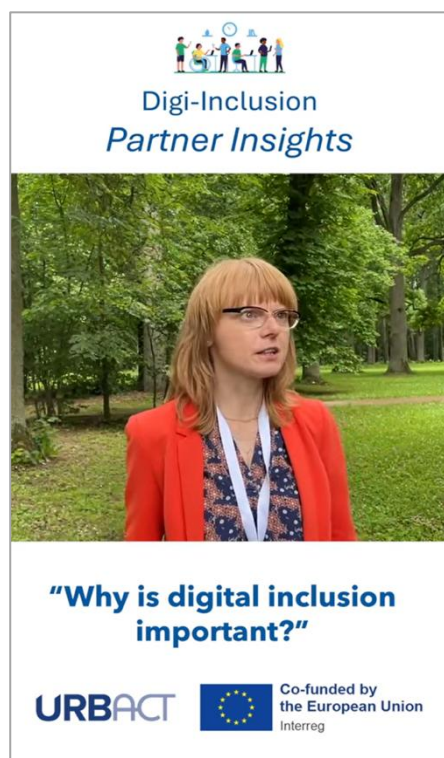
Another key strategic approach to network communication was to regularly capture partner perspectives, thoughts and reflections throughout the lifetime of the project. Often recorded on the occasions of the regular physical network meetings hosted by network partners across Europe, videos with representatives of each partner served multiple purposes.

Firstly, they helped ensure partner engagement and understanding of the topics being explored by the network. Secondly, they supported the recording of the network journey and the evolution of thinking across its lifetime.

Finally, and crucially, they supported communication of the network's work and messages to an external audience. Once again, the short video format enabled easy dissemination of videos across social media platforms, as well as incorporation into network journals and posting on the network webpage.

Examples included videos of partner reflections on key topics for the network such as:

- Why is digital inclusion important?
- Reflections on local pilot actions
- Reflections on the network journey
- One word to describe the Digi-inclusion Network

Another approach used was to record online discussions between partners on key topics, such as this recorded discussion between the Lead Partner representatives and the Lead Expert on insights from study visits undertaken in Barcelona.

Figure 11: A recorded online discussion between the Lead Partner and Lead Expert capturing important network insights
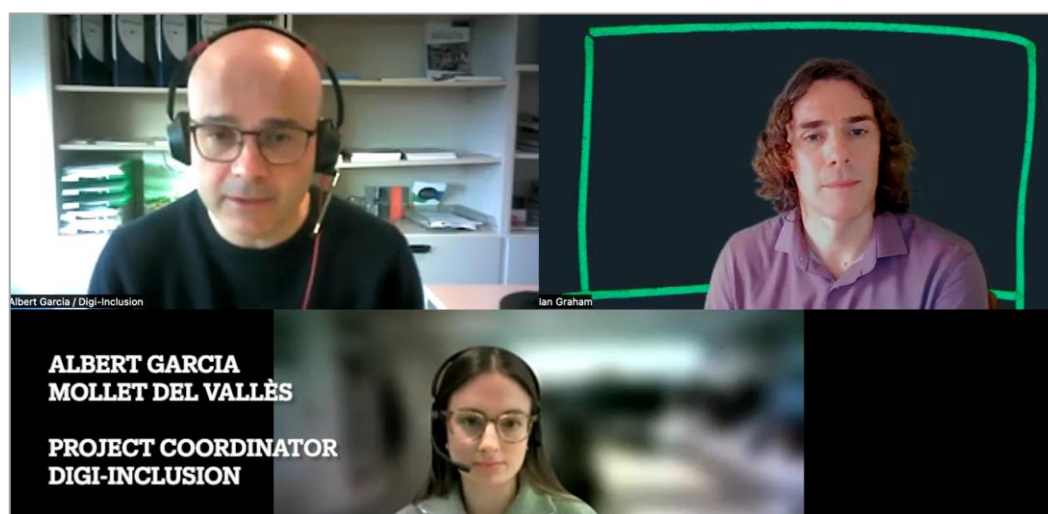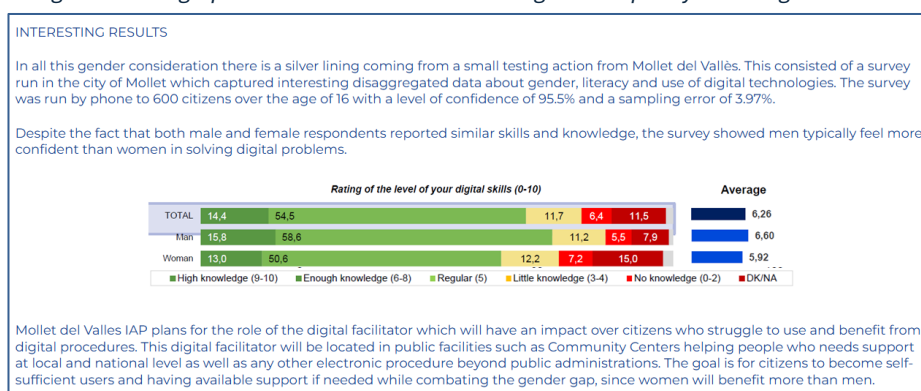
A.vi. Network articles

A more traditional, but important communications activity has been the production of network articles - some focused more on thematic topics and knowledge and other focused more of network activities and the exchange process. These articles have typically been written by the Lead Partner or Lead Expert and are published and hosted on the network page of the URBACT website.

These articles serve to capture and share the latest thinking about important topics of relevance to tackling digital exclusion in cities across Europe. Examples include:

- Leaving No-one Behind in a Digital World, by Lead Expert Ian Graham

- Breaking stereotypes: The triumph of a disability inclusion, by Lead Partner, Albert Garcia

- From Transnational Inspiration to Local Exploration: The Importance of Local Study Visits and Stakeholder Involvement, by Lead Parter, Neus Parés

- Gender Equality in the digital world, by Lead Partner, Albert Garcia

Figure 12: Infographics from a network article on gender equality in the digital world

Other articles focused more on the network journey, to capture and share insights from the networking and exchange process. These included articles related to key project milestones, such as physical transnational network meetings hosted by partner cities.

Examples of more process-focused articles include:

- DIGI-INCLUSION Network 1st Transnational Meeting in Mollet del Vallès

- Green light! Same Journey; new stages

- URBACT Local Group (ULG) Meetings: Fostering Collaboration and Digital Inclusion

- Looking back to look forward

Figure 13: Articles also shared highlights related to key project milestones
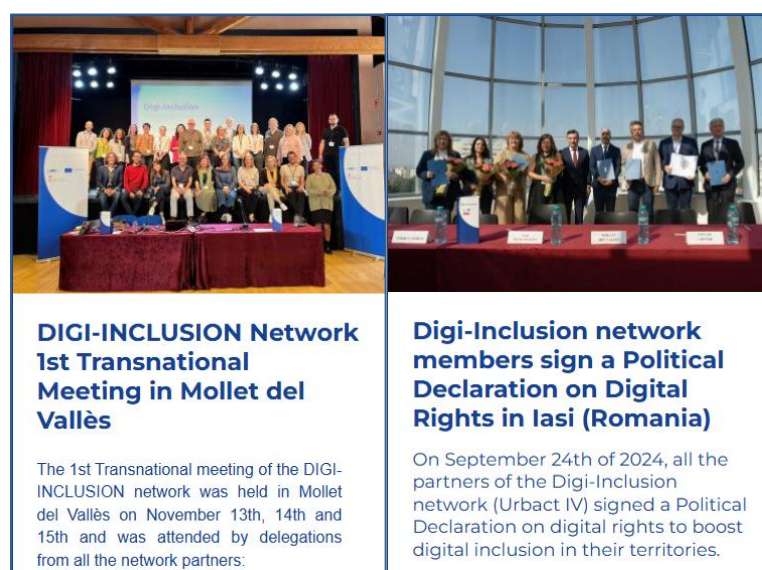
A.vii.   Internal communication

One of the key choices made by the network was to support internal communication within the network partnership through the creation of a dedicated network Slack Channel. The channel provided a shared space where the network partners and experts could exchange and communicate about the ongoing work of Digi-inclusion.

The channel had dedicated discussion threads on each transnational meeting to enable effective planning and preparation of each meeting. It also included threads on key topics for the network such as how to measure the digital divide and network videos.

The channel facilitated the process of assigning and keep up to date with tasks. It also provided a clear space where partners could be sure to find the latest information, documents and discussions - rather than getting lost in complicated email chains.

The channel was private to invited members from the network partners and enabled everyone to see updates in real time. The channel also supported the feeling of being part of a community and informal networking and exchange on project topics.

Figure 14: Screengrab of the group Slack channel
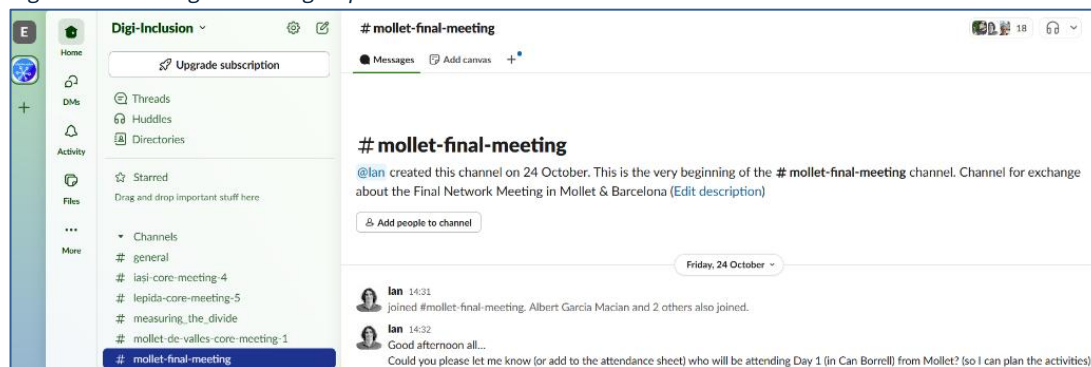
A.viii.   Network song

One of the more unusual and creative tools used by the network for communicating about digital exclusion and the work of the network was the creation of a network song entitled "United for Change"!

The song was produced thanks to the creative efforts of the network's Latvian colleague, Gatis Kasparinskis, supported by AI tools.

The song is a fun and engaging way to support understanding of the network's aims and goals, highlighting aspects of digital exclusion, the network partnership and how cooperation between cities can foster meaningful change. It has also been used as backdrop to many of the network Journal videos, creating a clear brand identify for both PPs and external audiences.

"Digital divides, we aim to mend.
With all the data, our efforts blend.
From diverse cities, our struggle grows.
Through shared solutions, progress flows."

Listen to the full song on YouTube.

Figure 15: Digi-inclusion is possibly the first URBACT network to have its own song!
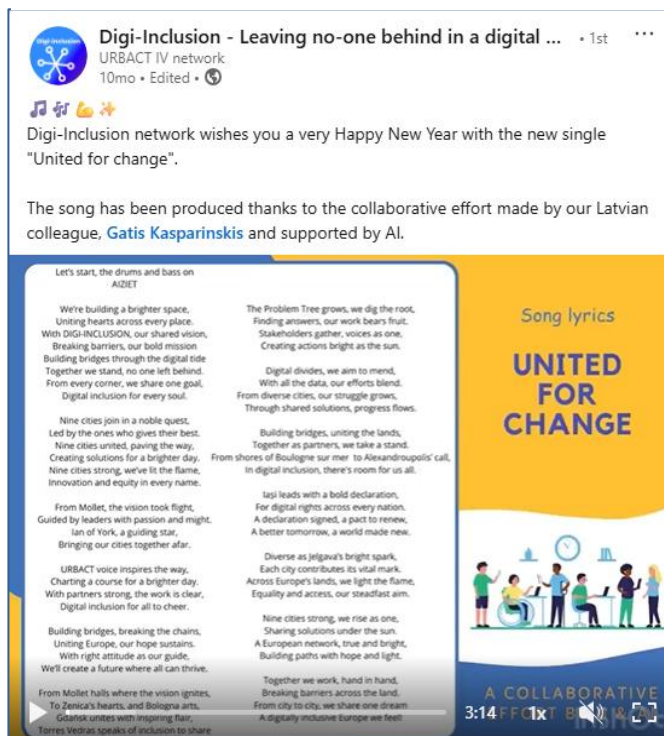
B. Local Level Communication

Digi-Inclusion network partners have also worked intensively to disseminate at local level the work carried out by the network and key messages around how to tackle digital exclusion. This helps build local motivation and lasting support for proposed actions, while also boosting cities' international visibility, and supporting URBACT and EU communication goals.

B.i.   Partners' own digital channels

One of the most frequent and common ways of supporting local level communication was disseminating network news and outputs through partners' own communication channels, including websites, digital newsletters and social media.

Social media

Figure 16: The Digi-Inclusion BiH account regularly posted about the project in Bosnian language

One of the most active partners on social media was **Zenica-Doboj Canton** in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, just in the period March - June 2025 they posted 48 times (24 items across both LinkedIn and Facebook).

They created a dedicated profile on each platform dedicated to Digi-Inclusion in Bosnia-Herzegovina and regularly posted a mix of network news (new videos, articles etc.) and local activities in English and/or Bosnian.

They also posted regularly on the Zenica-Doboj Canton website , including for example on the occasion of signing the joint political declaration

Figure 17: Gdansk highlighted the outcomes of their pilot action through LinkedIn

DIGI-INCLUSION BiH • 1st
Project Expert at DDIP ZDC
4mo •

Osmi sastanak Urbact lokalne grupe projekta DIGI-INCLUSION
Osmi sastanak Urbact lokalne grupe (ULG) za područje Zeničko-dobojskog kantona održan je 3. jula 2025. godine. ULG predstavlja ...more

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👍❤️ 7

👍 Like   💬 Comment   🔁 Repost   ✈ Send

Włączenie osób starszych do testowania pozwala tworzyć lepsze usługi dla wszystkich. Ich uwagi dotyczyły intuicyjności, dostępności, języka i bezpieczeństwa.

Za zaufanie i wsparcie dziękujemy też Bartosz Wojtasiak (A11y Dostępność) i Patryk Jar.

Wydarzenie odbyło się w ramach projektu „Digi-Inclusion - Leaving no-one behind in a digital world" ze środków Programu URBACT IV (EFRR).

Anna Knoff, Aleksandra Abakanowicz, Alicja Świtlik, Anna Malinowska, Anna Nowicka, Michał Kotlarz, Wisława Niwczyk

#URBACT #DIGI_INCLUSION #LeavingNoOneBehindInaDigitalWorld #Gdansk #UX #UI #dostepnosc

Show translation

Amy Labarriere Cook and 39 others   13 comments · 7 reposts

Reactions

Meanwhile, Network partner **Gdansk** in Poland was able to make use of an existing LinkedIn profile run by the project coordination team, which already had a larger following to reach a broad audience with network content and messages.

For example, the LinkedIn post on the left from summer 2025 highlighted the pilot action to organise and promote a cross-sectoral workshop for seniors to test public digital services. It was made through the partner's Inkubator STARTER LinkedIn profile.

Not only did the post provide a nice write up of the activity with photos and links to diverse partners, but enabled good engagement with stakeholders through the comments section.

Newsletters

In addition to social media, network partners were able to take advantage of existing newsletters to include important updates from the work of the network.

One of the most impressive examples was from **Lepida** - a company working to guarantee the availability of networks and digital services across the Emilia-Romagna region, which was representing the Italian city of **Bologna** in the project.

Figure 18: Lepida's newsletter article on the emerging Integrated Action Plan
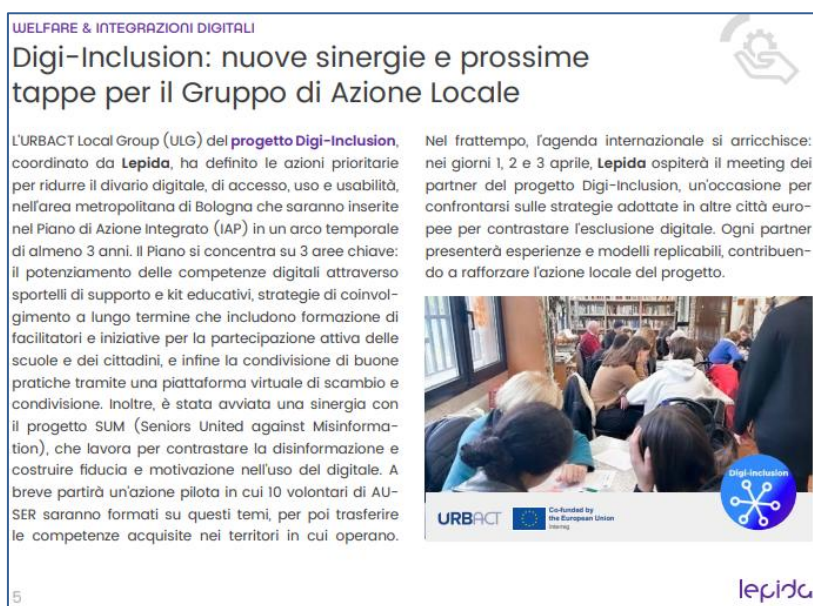
Lepida was able to take advantage of its longstanding newsletter which reaches over 12,000 contacts with each edition to share news about the project and raise awareness of digital exclusion topics.

For example, in its 8-page newsletter from February 2025, one half-page article was devoted to the work of the ULG to define priority actions for reducing digital exclusion in the Bologna metropolitan area and the added value of the network exchanges.

Meanwhile, the French partner city of **Boulogne-sur-Mer** used the newsletter of its European projects office, Flash Europe, to raise awareness of the project and the topic of digital exclusion.

Flash Europe is a monthly e-newsletter sent to stakeholders in the region to promote European projects involving the territory and European funding opportunities.

Since January 2025, it has regularly included articles about the Digi inclusion project

For example, the transnational network meeting held in Boulogne in June 2025 was the front-page story of the June edition of the newsletter - highlighting local partners involved in the project, as well as the emerging outputs of the network and its partnership.

Figure 19: Digi-Inclusion was the headline story of the June 2025 edition of Boulogne's Flash Europe

B.ii.   Local media outreach

As well as general public outreach, network partners have shown successful approaches to local media engagement to help promote the project and the subject of digital exclusion through local newspapers, radio, TV, etc.

Typically, partners have taken advantage of key moments during the lifetime of the network to engage local media partners through press releases or press conferences to capture the media's attention.

The Lead Partner city of **Mollet del Vallès** has regularly used press conferences sparking coverage of project activities and messages in local media. This happened successfully around the launch of its pilot action to test the use of digital facilitators in public facilities, which was picked up by both local radio and the local online newspaper:

Figure 20: Mollet used press conferences to attract the attention of local media at key

- *"Mollet will establish digital facilitators in public facilities to advise citizens when carrying out digital procedures" (Radio Mollet 9/10/24)*
- *"Mollet will launch a pilot test to detect groups affected by the digital divide in the city" (somMollet 9/10/24) (see right)*

Mollet also launched in 2025 a follow-up **campaign using videos of local champions** who have overcome the digital divide as role models to raise awareness of this issue amongst the local population.

Figure 21: Alexandroupolis was able to attract local media attention at key milestones of the project.

Alexandroupolis in Greece was particularly active with its media outreach and able to attract significant media attention at key milestones of the project, including the project's various transnational network meetings.

For example, not only did it publish the news about the signing of the joint political declaration on the municipality's official website, but it was also able to gain traction through various media outlets, including both online newspapers and local radio, including:

- www.myota.gr
- www.enanews.gr
- www.radioevros.gr
- www.faros-24.gr

Indeed, a key added value of the signing of the political declaration in Iasi was that several partners were able to use it to attract media attention to the topic of digital exclusion and its relevance to cities, such as this article in www.gdansk.pl (30/09/25).

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B.iii.   Organising awareness-raising events

Local events are another approach used by Digi-inclusion partners to raise awareness of key topics around digital inclusion. They are an opportunity to reach, not just media or just decision-makers, but a range of local stakeholders.

A great example of this is provided by the **Municipality of Iași**, which organised a local public debate on the topic of "Vulnerable Communities and Digitalization" In October 2025. The event was organised in partnership with the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, as part of the 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Days' in Iasi.

Figure 22: Iasi organised a public debate on digital exclusion of vulnerable communities

The debate brought together representatives of the local administration, academic staff, students, NGOs and digital experts to analyse the risks of digital exclusion of vulnerable groups created by digital transformation.

The partner also organised a public presentation of the survey results carried out during the summer as a way of raising broader public awareness of local digital exclusion.

B.iv.   Representing the project in external events

Network partners were also able to participate in events organised by others. Often partners were able to combine the goal of increasing their own knowledge about topics relevant to the network and the opportunity to share network activities and messages with a wider interested audience. Examples of participation in external events typically fall under three categories:

Fairs

Fairs bring together a wide range of professionals active in a specific field and/or interested in related topics. Being present in a fair can be a good way to make useful contacts and generate future possibilities for cooperation. Examples where network partners were active include:

- The network partner from the **Gdansk Entrepreneurial Foundation** was present at 'Infoshare', the largest tech fair in Central and Eastern Europe in May 2024. Being present at the fair brought the Foundation - including its role in Digi-inclusion - to the attention of more than 6,500 attendees.

- The network partner from **Jelgava Municipality** was able participate in the Zemgale entrepreneur forum held in Lietuva on 15 of May 2024, presenting the Digi-inclusion network supported by printed materials such as a roll-ups.

Figure 23: Dissemination materials such as roll-ups and flyers support network communication at events, e.g. the Zemgale entrepreneur forum in

- The project partner and ULG members from **Zenica-Doboj Canton** took part in 'ZEPS 2024', the largest international trade fair in the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina - including being represented in a panel discussion on "Artificial Intelligence and Digitalization".

Conferences

Conferences on topics of thematic relevance are also key opportunities both to learn more about related subjects and present the work of the network on digital inclusion to relevant professionals and experts who can provide added value to the network. Examples from the network include:

- **Gdansk Entrepreneurship Foundation** gave presentations on the Digi-inclusion project and its activities at several events, including the "Urban and Regional Policy Congress" in Krakow.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton** participated in the conference on the "Digital Transformation of SMEs in Western Balkan Countries" held in Zenica in May 2024.
- **Mollet del Vallès** represented the Digi-inclusion network at an event organised by the Catalan Government on "25 years of digital inclusion by Omnia network"
- **Iasi Municipality** participated at a conference on "The Impact of Digital Transformation on Public Services" organised by Al Cuza University in Iasi.

Internal/working meetings

Internal working meetings can also provide important opportunities to raise awareness of the project and exchange with relevant parties. For example, Mollet acted as speaker in the working meeting arranged by the Council (Diputació) of Barcelona province on "Positioning and Influence of local administrations in the European Union" - showcasing the work of Mollet in Digi-inclusion.

Meanwhile, Zenica-Doboj Canton took part in a meeting of the 'Digital Transformation Association' of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the results of a study on the digital literacy of the population. This gave them new knowledge and an opportunity to engage more stakeholders in the project's efforts.

B.v.   Recognition of an effective joined-up approach

Finally, **Jelgava Municipality** has shown a great example of an effective and joined up approach to communicating key aspects of its work to tackle digital exclusion, and to raise local awareness of the phenomenon and its related challenges - as well as the work of the URBACT network. This was officially recognised as a success story of the INTERREG programme, in its recent celebration of 20 years' of activity in Eastern Europe.

A key and good practice communication tool was the video that Jelgava produced about its local pilot intervention: "DigiClass - Jelgava's mobile digital classroom" aimed at supporting digitally excluded people in rural areas. The video is an excellent example of how to make project efforts more accessible to external audiences.

Specific ad hoc activities - such as the video - were supported by ongoing dissemination efforts, such as regularly posting about the project on the Municipality's website, and further

Figure 24: Jelgava produced an attractive 4-minute video about its pilot mobile classroom

"Mobilā digitālā klase" apmācības URBACT IV projektā "DIGI-INCLUSION"

Play K

"DigiClass" - Jelgava's mobile digital classroom

URBACT   Co-funded by the European Union   Interreg

outreach through the Municipality's Facebook page.

Jelgava's social media posts are also actively shared by various partners and colleagues at different levels - an effective partnership-based approach to multiplying outreach and building engagement on how to tackle digital exclusion locally.