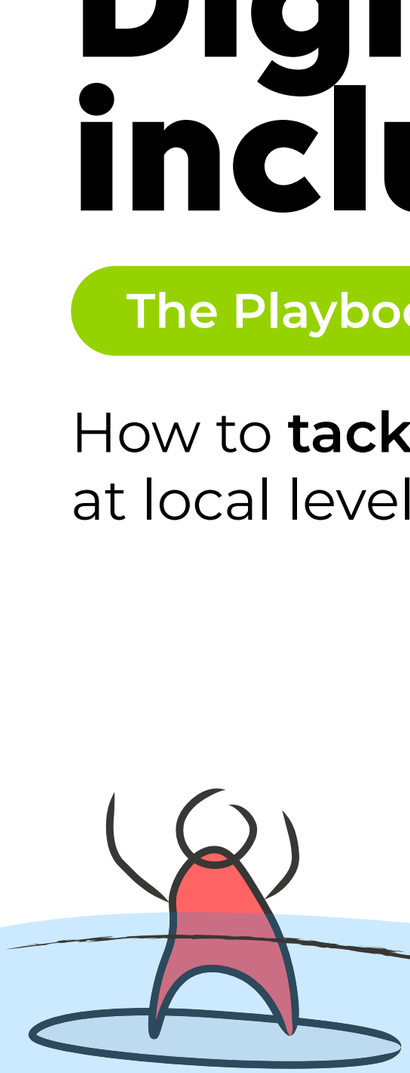
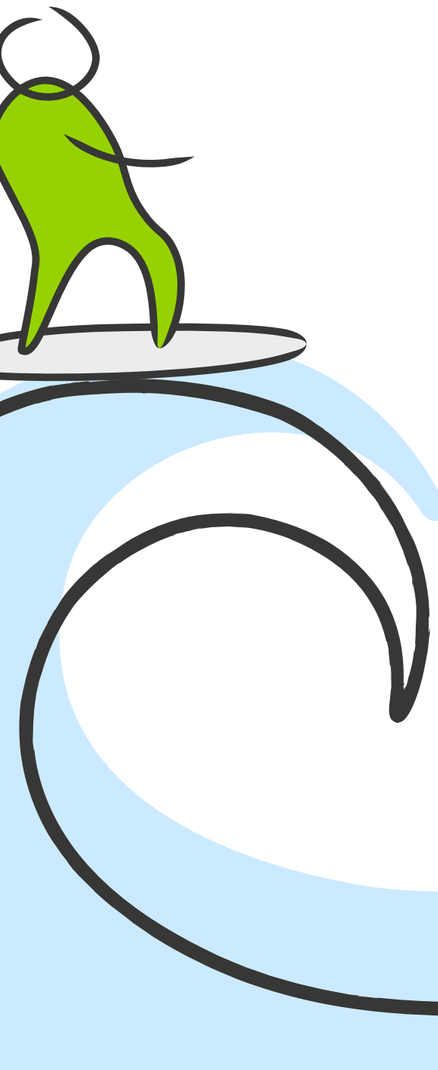
# Digi-inclusion

**The Playbook**

How to **tackle digital exclusion** at local level





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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Digi-inclusion Playbook is a key output of the URBACT-supported 'Digi-inclusion' network. From 2023-2025 the network's purpose was to support exchange and learning about how cities can tackle digital exclusion and help their residents to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital world.

Lead Partner:
**Municipality of Mollet del Vallès**, Catalonia, Spain

Project Partners:
**Jelgava Local Municipality**, Latvia
**City of Alexandroupolis**, Greece
**Municipality of Torres Vedras**, Portugal
**Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation**, Poland
**City of Iași**, Romania
**Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale**, France
**Lepida ScpA, Bologna**, Italy
**Zenica-Doboj Canton (DDIP)**, Bosnia and Herzegovina

# Digi-inclusion

## The Playbook

Playbook created and produced by **Ian Graham** and **Ed Thorpe**.

With input from **Digi-inclusion partners** and **Amy Labarriere-Cook**.

Original 'Wave and Surfers' design by Ian Graham.

Graphic design by Coco Creatividad, Barcelona.

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# What is the “Digi-inclusion Playbook” and how to use it

The Digi-inclusion Playbook represents the knowledge developed during the Digi-inclusion network. Its target audience is cities, local authorities and other urban practitioners who wish to learn more about and/or gain inspiration about how to tackle digital exclusion at local level.

The Playbook doesn’t generally repeat or include information or knowledge readily available elsewhere – it is intended to complement existing practices and resources. Regardless of your experience on the topic, there should be useful content that can help you, organised into four main areas:

## Part 1. What is digital exclusion

Knowing what digital exclusion means, how it manifests at local level, and what causes it, including new models for how to think about and approach it.

***A ‘theoretical’ explanation*** *of digital exclusion and the digital divide, to help you to understand and think about the topic in a more nuanced way.*

## Part 2. A new Framework for tackling digital exclusion

Linking our new models with key Dimensions of practice that help build an integrated approach to tackling digital exclusion.

*Our new* ***Digi-inclusion Framework*** *– a new way to think about digital exclusion strategically and holistically, and take an integrated approach to tackling it at local level.*

## Part 3. The Plays: refine your approach to local Digital exclusion

Refining your understanding of who is excluded and how, what is already happening locally and who the main stakeholders are to engage with.

*Our Digi-inclusion “**Plays**” – a menu of practical steps, methods and tools that can help develop your approach to understanding and tackling digital exclusion in your territory.*

## Part 4. Tackling Digital exclusion in practice

Real life stories from the Digi-inclusion network and beyond, to provide some examples of how this approach can be used in practice and what that could look like.

*These real case examples illustrate the activity and link the theory and practice from cities and authorities across Europe.*

You can dip into any part of the Playbook - each of the sections can stand alone. However, they work best when considered together, particularly if you are new to the topic.

There are navigation links at the top of pages, and within the Plays and the Case Examples to help you move around the docuement more easily. You can work through in sequence, or pick and choose which parts ar emost useful for you.

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**Part 3: “The Plays” – Refine your local approach to tackling digital exclusion**

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  Refining your objectives and strategic approach
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  Developing an ecosystem approach
- The C Plays
  Better understanding local needs
- The D Plays
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# Part 1:

# What is digital exclusion?

## An introduction to digital exclusion

Digital exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are unable to take advantage of the digital tools and services being used by others.

Whilst the 'digital divide' describes the gap between those with and without access to digital technologies, 'digital exclusion' focuses on the lived consequences of being on the wrong side of that gap.

Digital exclusion can limit a person's ability to: work or apply for jobs; access education, healthcare and financial services; stay connected socially; and participate in civic life. Digital exclusion is directly linked with broader social and economic inequalities.

The ongoing digital transition is not a solution to digital exclusion. Rather, digital exclusion is shaped by the rapid emergence of digital technologies. The more tools and services become **digitalised**, the more people risk being left behind by the pace of change (see the "Wave of Digitalisation" below).

This first Part of the Playbook combines established digital exclusion principles with new knowledge, models and insights developed during the Digi-inclusion project.

## Established risks factors for digital exclusion

A literature review conducted as part of the URBACT Digi-inclusion network found that the research is quite clear that certain groups are consistently at higher risk of digital exclusion. The most commonly identified at-risk groups are:

- Low-income groups (including the unemployed)
- People with low educational attainment
- Older people
- Residents of isolated (rural) communities
- People with disabilities
- Migrants

Being in one of these groups does not guarantee digital exclusion, but it does increase the likelihood - especially when factors overlap (e.g. older people in rural areas, or unemployed people with disabilities).

However, understanding these risk factors does not help us to understand the reality of digital exclusion (how it manifests) or the causes of digital exclusion.

From the work of the Digi-inclusion network, we found that a helpful way to understand how people experience digital exclusion is to think of different profiles along a metaphorical 'Wave of Digitalisation' sweeping through society.



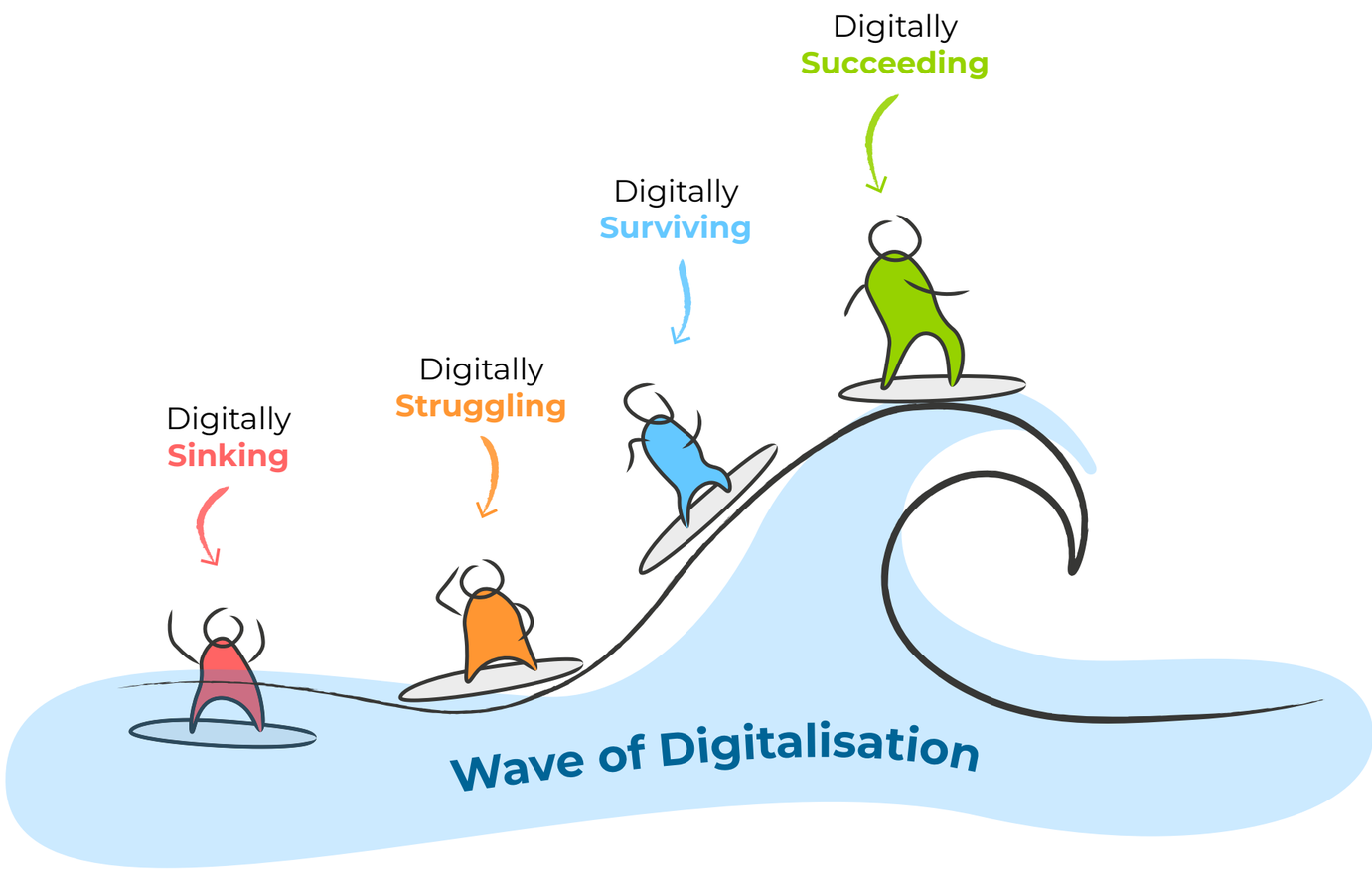
## The ‘Wave of Digitalisation’ and our four user profiles

If we imagine digital transition as a ‘Wave of Digitalisation’ sweeping through society, we can understand that individuals cannot stop the Wave. What will determine their outcomes in relation to the digital transition is their ability to ‘surf’ the Wave - making use of it to support them and add value to their lives.

The reality for many is that they are struggling to keep up as the Wave sweeps along. People can even end up being left behind entirely.

In our visual, we show four broad ‘profiles’ of people on the Wave, as generalisations to illustrate the way different people experience digital inclusion/exclusion.

This visual metaphor can help us to understand that digital exclusion is experienced on a spectrum and not only by those who have been totally left behind by the Wave of Digitalisation. We will use this metaphor throughout the Playbook to help explain aspects of digital exclusion and how this exclusion can be thought about and addressed.



## The 3 manifestations of digital exclusion

Digital exclusion is complex, nuanced, relative and evolving. It cannot be reduced to one simple test or indicator and can be hard to identify precisely. However, digital exclusion reveals itself in three main ways:

### 1. INFREQUENT ACCESS

Someone using the internet once a week is experiencing a form of digital exclusion compared to someone who is online every day. The same for someone with access for half an hour a day compared to someone online for 8 hours a day.

### 2. NARROW USE

A more subtle form of exclusion is seen in terms of what people do online. Someone who only accesses the internet to scroll social media or stream videos is more digitally excluded than someone who uses their online time also to work, shop and book appointments – even if the more excluded person is online for more time.

### 3. LIMITED OUTCOMES

Finally, people can experience digital exclusion in terms of limitations in the outcomes they are able to achieve from their digital use. This can be the hardest to identify or measure, but can even affect people who are frequently online and demonstrating a variety of uses. That use may simply not translate into successful outcomes in the way it might for others.

## The 4 barriers of digital exclusion

We have seen that digital exclusion reveals itself as infrequent access, narrow use and/or limited outcomes. However, these manifestations of digital exclusion tell us nothing about their underlying causes.

The work of the Digi-inclusion network – building on existing research – has identified four main barriers that drive exclusion:

1. ACCESS barriers - difficulties getting connected to digital tools and services

2. USABILITY barriers – difficulties using digital tools and services effectively

3. USEFULNESS barriers – difficulties deriving value from digital tools and services

4. TRUST barriers – difficulties relying on digital tools and services to be safe

Each barrier has both an individual side (what people lack) and a system side (what the digital environment fails to provide). This results in an understanding of the causes of digital exclusion in terms of 8 aspects. We can combine these aspects into one causality matrix of the 8 aspects – ‘The 8 Causes Matrix’.

## The 8 Causes Matrix

The 8 Causes Matrix shows the relationship between the causes of digital exclusion and what they mean for people.

Each of the 8 casual aspects is something that is lacking, and represents the intersection of the individual or the systemic side with one of the four types of barrier to digital inclusion.

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

## Understanding the reality of digital exclusion through our four user profiles

We can use the previous section to consider how digital exclusion manifests for each of the four different user profiles, and consider the typical sorts of causes of digital exclusion for each profile in practice.

| User profile | Manifestations | Causes |
|---|---|---|
|  **Digitally sinking**<br><br>**Barrier pattern**<br>All four barriers may be strong and compounding | **Frequency of access**<br>Potentially never use the internet, or infrequently | **Access barriers**<br>Little or no connection. Possibly cannot afford or obtain devices or broadband |
| | **Breadth of use**<br>If has access, may be limited to very basic forms of useage, such reading a website, or watching videos, but may be still have trouble using these | **Usability barriers**<br>Minimal skills; struggles even with basic tasks |
| | **Extent of outcomes**<br>Likely has limited or no useful outcomes, beyond maybe some limited transaction. May also need support to achieve this | **Usefulness barriers**<br>Motivation could vary, with some wishing to be more connected, whilst others see little attraction in the digital world |
| | | **Trust barriers**<br>Perception and lack of understanding of system risks discourage use |

# Understanding the reality of digital exclusion through our four user profiles

| User profile | Manifestations | Causes |
|---|---|---|
|  **Digitally struggling**<br><br>**Barrier pattern**<br>Access + usability dominate, but usefulness and trust can also hold them back | **Frequency of access**<br>Goes online occasionally but not consistently<br><br>**Breadth of use**<br>Uses a narrow range of tools and services they have learnt (e.g. a few websites, messaging tools, simple browsing) but not able to freely create new accounts or use new tools/services without support<br><br>**Extent of outcomes**<br>Benefits are modest, such as basic communication or entertainment, with limited ability to improve opportunities | **Access barriers**<br>Potentially limited/unreliable connection (e.g. shared and/or old devices, poor broadband, limited data plans etc.)<br><br>**Usability barriers**<br>Basic skills only. Not able to use new tools/services and may struggle with new updatesto any apps they do use<br><br>**Usefulness barriers**<br>Could vary, with some wishing to have greater access, whilst others are unsure how digital tools could benefit them more<br><br>**Trust barriers**<br>Wary of scams or errors which deters deeper engagement; avoids sensitive activities (e.g. online banking) |

## Understanding the reality of digital exclusion through our four user profiles

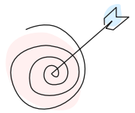
| User profile | Manifestations | Causes |
|---|---|---|
|  **Digitally surviving**<br><br>**Barrier pattern**<br>Access mostly overcome, but usability + usefulness gaps limit outcomes; trust issues remain situational | **Frequency of access**<br>Has regular (daily) internet access<br><br>**Breadth of use**<br>Engages with a broad mix of activities (e.g. shopping, banking, accessing services) and probably uses some digital tools at work. But take up of new tools and services can be slow<br><br>**Extent of outcomes**<br>Gains practical benefits personally and professionally but can also see that others are able to do and achieve more and more easily | **Access barriers**<br>Stable access, often via multiple devices and connections<br><br>**Usability barriers**<br>Can use a range of tools, but skills and confidence are uneven, particularly with new apps or services<br><br>**Usefulness barriers**<br>Sees quality of life increases from use of digital services (information, shopping, banking, work) but often within a set range of mainstream tools that they have (slowly) become used to<br><br>**Trust barriers**<br>Some concerns about privacy and safety; cautious with new tools |

# Understanding the reality of digital exclusion through our four user profiles

| User profile | Manifestations | Causes |
|---|---|---|
|  **Digitally succeeding**<br><br>**Barrier pattern**<br>Individual barriers largely overcome, but system-side failures (security, misinformation, exclusionary design) can still affect them | **Frequency of access**<br>Regular use: hourly, rather than daily<br><br>**Breadth of use**<br>Comfortable using a wide range of digital tools for work, learning, services, communication, and leisure, including advanced tools. At ease using new tools and services without instruction<br><br>**Extent of outcomes**<br>Achieves strong benefits: career opportunities, efficient service access, rich social connections, and active civic participation | **Access barriers**<br>Reliable access via multiple devices and connections<br><br>**Usability barriers**<br>Confident with a wide range of tools, learns new ones easily<br><br>**Usefulness barriers**<br>Consistently finds value and interested in new services and opportunities in work, services, civic life<br><br>**Trust barriers**<br>High confidence; but still potentially exposed to systemic risks (cybersecurity, misinformation) |

## Four dimensions of tackling digital exclusion in a holistic way

As we start to think about how we use all this to take practical action to tackle digital exclusion, we observe that there are four 'Dimensions' that have a big impact on our approach. To be most effective, we need to work on:



Refining **objectives** and **strategy**

Having clearly defined objectives for your digital inclusion work to inform a holistic and coherent strategy



Building an **ecosystem** approach

Developing and supporting a networked ecosystem of partners and stakeholders



Better understanding **local needs**

Better understanding the nature of local digital exclusions to develop focused and impactful responses



Improving **interventions**

Understanding the landscape of activities already happening, and strengthening these for a holistic approach

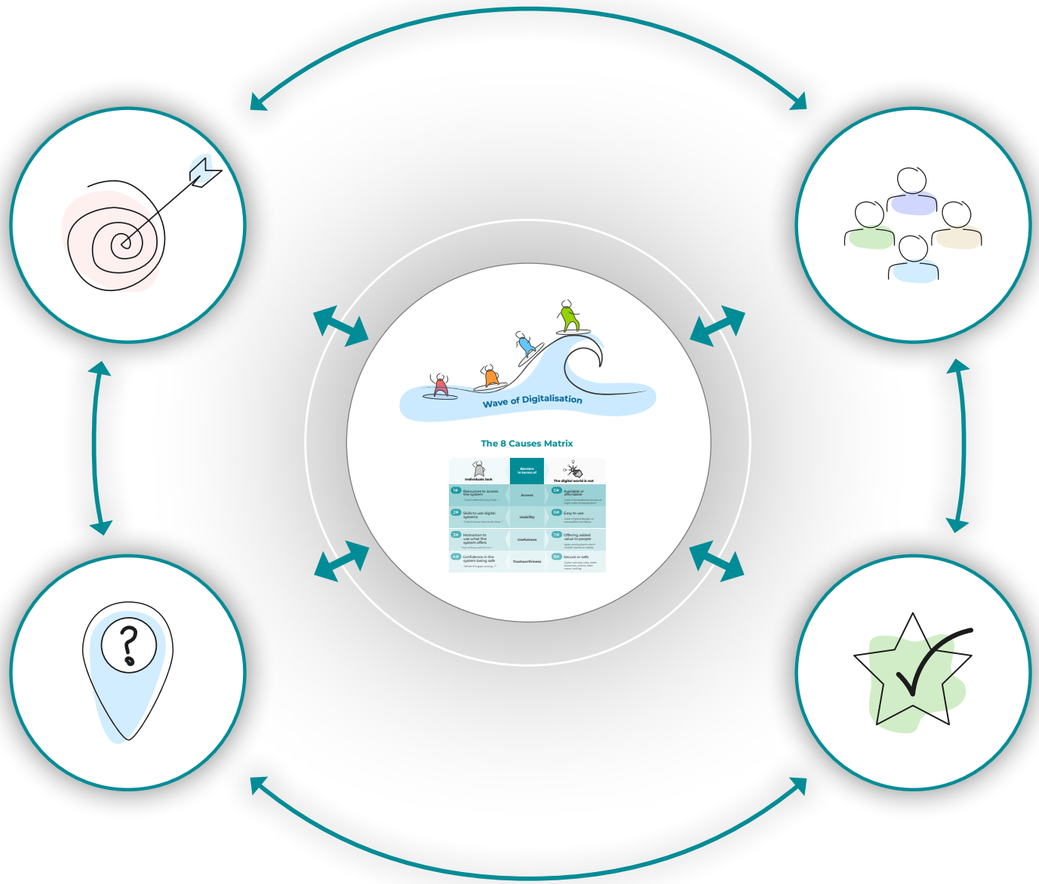
The Wave of Digitalisation, our four user profiles, and the 8 Causes Matrix are all helpful for understanding and thinking about digital exclusion and its complexity. We can see that exclusion is experienced on a spectrum and that it is not a static experience. A person's experience of digital exclusion can be situational and evolve over time.

We can also see from our user profiles that there is no simple correlation between the causes of digital exclusion and its manifestations. Two people may access digital tools in similarly limited ways, but for very different reasons.

However, this understanding is only the starting point for thinking about how to tackle digital exclusion in practice.

In Part 2 of the Playbook, we show how you can combine these four Dimensions to help turn this understanding into tailor-made approaches to tackling digital exclusion at local level. Specifically, we present a Framework that takes account of the complementary need to make progress in terms of the four Dimensions.

We invite you to dig into the Playbook to help you think about where and how to make progress, and which 'Plays' might be best adapted to helping you make progress and take your next crucial steps in tackling digital exclusion at local level!




Part 2:

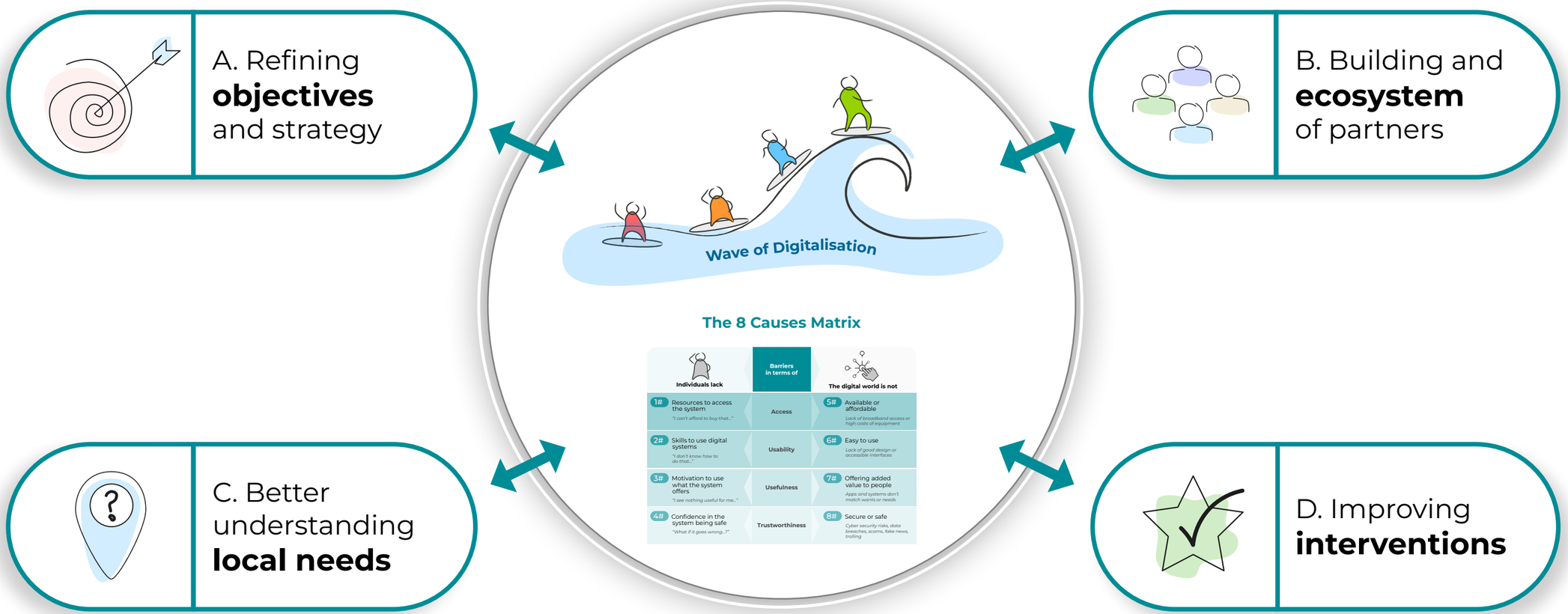
# A new Framework for tackling digital exclusion

# The Digi-inclusion Framework

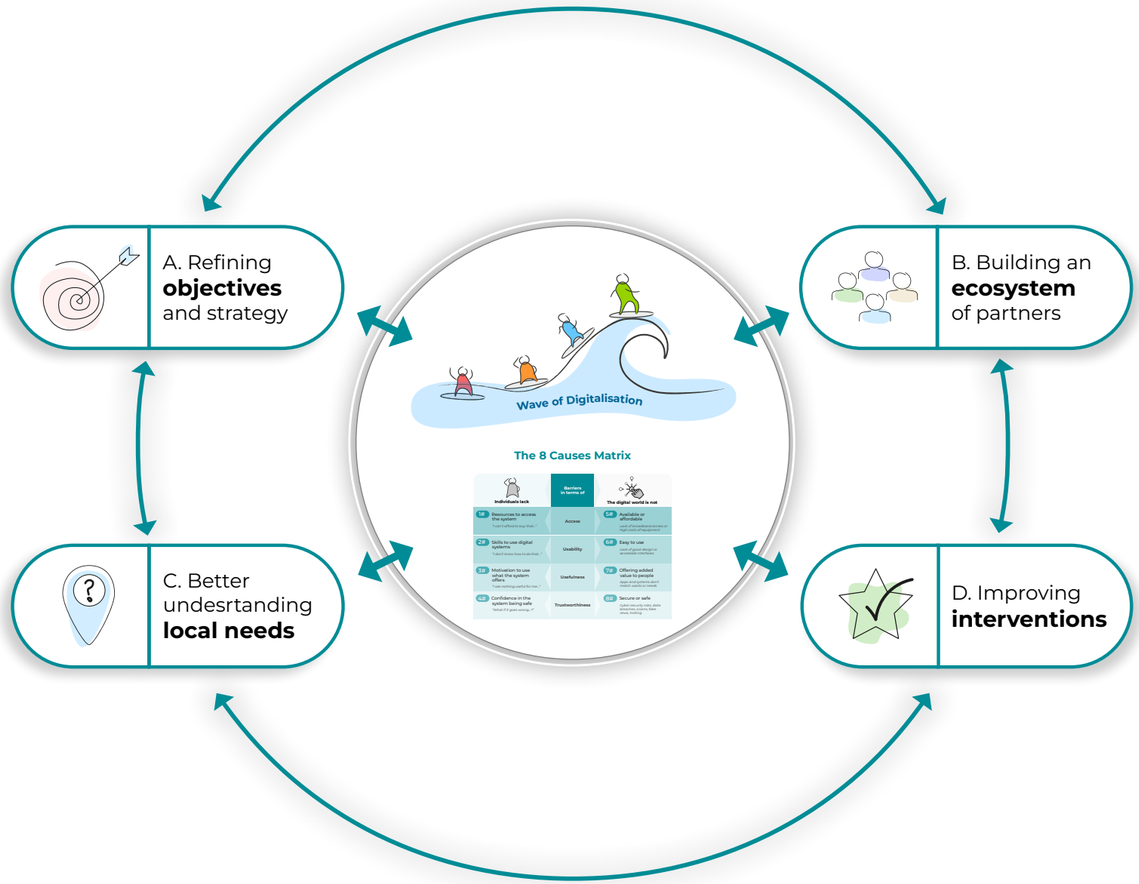
The Digi-inclusion Framework is comprised of:

**1. Two complementary models for understanding digital exclusion:** the 'Wave of Digitalisation' (Wave) and the '8 Causes Matrix' which together support the development of your understanding and overall approach to digital exclusion.

**2. Four inter-related 'Dimensions' of addressing digital exclusion in a strategic and holistic way:** A: Objectives, B: Ecosystem; C: Local needs; D: Interventions.



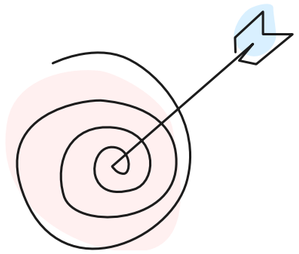
# The Digi-inclusion Framework




The Wave and the 8 Causes Matrix support the four Dimensions in a reciprocal way – each Dimension can be strengthened by using the Wave and the Causes Matrix in a variety of ways; and each Dimension provides content and insights that can support the development of other Dimensions at the same time. The four Dimensions may be familiar concepts, however it is important to understand how they relate specifically to tackling digital exclusion at local level, and how they work together in this context.

A core principle of the Digi-inclusion Framework is that the process for analysing digital exclusion and tackling it at local level is not a linear process – there is not one simple, sequential set of steps to take. All four Dimensions of the Framework need to be developed in parallel and/or iteratively. We offer the Wave and 8 Causes Matrix as useful tools for strengthening these Dimensions in a holistic and integrated way.

# A. Refining **objectives** and strategy



## Principle

Having clearly defined objectives for your digital inclusion work, which inform a holistic and coherent strategy, is important for tackling the challenge systematically and not in silos. Equally, refining your objectives as a conscious act can be beneficial, enabling you to rethink where resources should be targeted and how to have the most positive impact.

## Description

It is easy to assume that objectives should be just about targeting groups that are already digitally sinking, but there can be value in having a more nuanced approach. Thinking about needs of diverse user groups whose digital exclusion might not be so obvious can bring new insights and highlight gaps in the support offered.

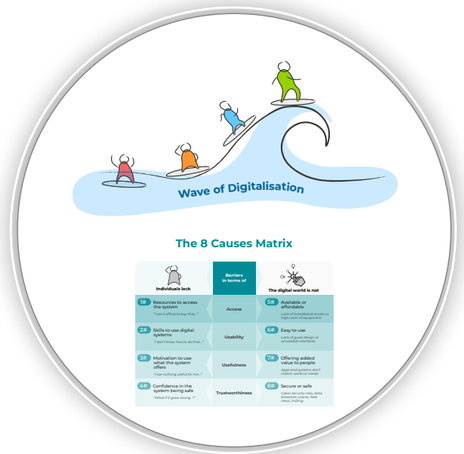
At the same time, many digital inclusion interventions end up being reactive, in response to observed or anecdotal needs. Whilst this can be of benefit to those individuals involved, it sometimes doesn't address the root causes of exclusion, and/or doesn't align with the overall strategy and priorities of the city. This leads to resource inefficiency and interventions that don't align with priorities or needs. Ensuring clear objectives, including knowing your target groups, areas of focus, and how these link to wider local strategy is key to success.

## Strengthening this Dimension

The Wave and Matrix offer a unique way to think in new ways about digital exclusion, refine your digital inclusion objectives, and to consider an integrated approach to your strategy in a more holistic way.

Plays that support this include:

- Use the Wave model to assess your strategic approachs (Play A1)
- Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess your strategic approach (Play A2)




## Drawing on the other Dimensions

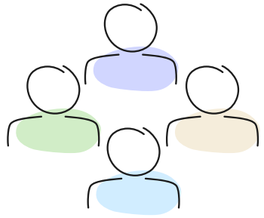
**Ecosystem** — Involve local stakeholders in the development of strategy and objectives in a participatory way.

**Local needs** — Local needs and data relating to them can be important to inform your strategy development.

**Interventions** — Make sure you strategy takes into account what is already happening and where the gaps are in support.

# Understanding the four Dimensions

## B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners



### Principle

In practice, digital exclusion cannot be tackled by just one organisation or one department – you need to develop and maintain a networked ecosystem of partners and stakeholders to be able to deliver holistic digital inclusion support.

### Description

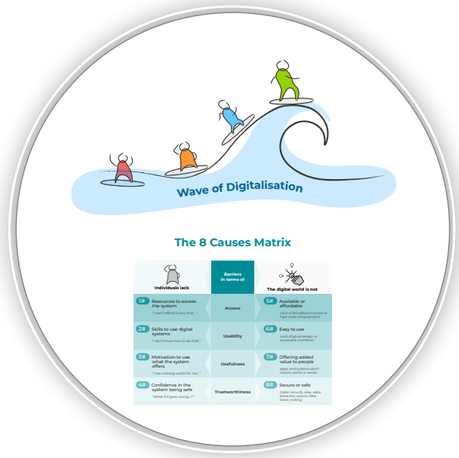
In territories where we don't know the full range of people and organisations who are already working on digital inclusion, there is a high risk of piecemeal interventions, duplication of effort, and missing out on the capacity and expertise of those who may be able to help. This means it is both hard to build a full picture of the state of play in the territory, and also to respond to the local challenges effectively. We need a good view of the whole ecosystem, and to have supporting local stakeholders and delivery partners that are working together to be more aware of each other. This means that needs can be identified better, resources can be deployed more effectively and efficiently, and the impact of the total set of interventions be increased.

### Strengthening this Dimension

Developing your digital inclusion ecosystem can start with the existing activities, or by understanding which target groups are already being supported.

Plays that can support this include

- Map the ecosystem of providers (Play B1)
- Bring together the ecosystem of providers (Play B2)
- Sign a local agreement (Play B3)




### Drawing on the other Dimensions

**Objectives and strategy**

Use your strategy and objectives to identify which (types of) organisations are working with your target groups or in the relevant areas etc.

**Local needs**

Look at which groups need support in your territory and use that to search for organisations that are (maybe) already working with these groups.

**Interventions**

Look at which interventions are already happening and approach the stakeholders involved

# C. Better understanding **local needs**



## Principle

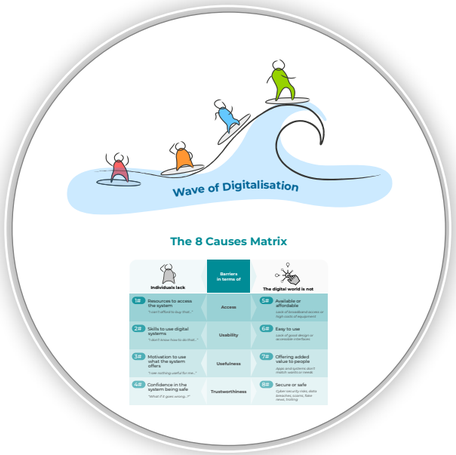
Better understanding local needs and the nature of local digital exclusions is valuable to be able to develop a more focused and impactful response, and is essential in order to target interventions at the most relevant issues and groups.

## Description

Tackling digital exclusion means addressing local needs, but it can be hard to get a clear picture of these; often the data doesn't exist and/or is difficult and expensive to obtain and keep up to date.

## Strengthening this Dimension

Gather data and insights to gain a better understanding of the local digital inclusion needs. Using the Wave can help to provide additional nuance and focus to the data collection, as can investigating causes of digital exclusion in terms of the 8 Causes Matrix.




Plays that can support this include:

- Review and analyse existing data (Play C1)
- Create spatial maps (Play C2)
- Conduct a broad survey (Play C3)
- Run targeted surveys (Play C4)
- Facilitate targeted focus groups (Play C5)
- Using personas for a better understanding of local at-risk profiles (Play C6)

## Drawing on the other Dimensions

**Objectives and strategy** — Consider your strategy / objectives to focus your research and data gathering activity on the priority areas

**Ecosystem** — Local stakeholders and delivery partners can also help provide better insights or share data

**Interventions** — Use data and insights gained from interventions that are happening already to add to your set of available information

# D. Improving **interventions**

## Principle

Understanding what activities are already happening, who they target and impact, and which of the 8 Causes they address are all key to aligning the response - having good understanding of the landscape of interventions, the added value of individual interventions, and the gaps in the offer.

## Description

The interventions you and partners make in your city are the core way you support people suffering from digital exclusion and adapt the system to be more inclusive for them. However, interventions can often happen in isolation from one another, and are sometimes not contributing to the overall approach in the most suitable ways.

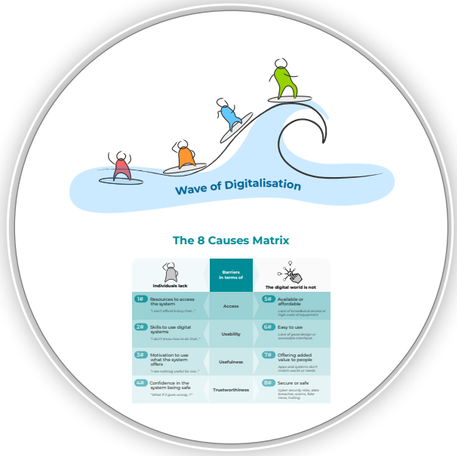
Aim to be clear which Causes an intervention is trying to address, understand which profiles are being targeted, how an intervention impacts them, and if/how it meets their needs. Ensure data and insights from interventions is gathered and fed into the system to drive future strategy. Consider how interventions combine and/or work together to support your aims.

## Strengthening this Dimension

Improve your understanding of interventions that are already happening, and identify gaps to be filled by implementing new interventions.

Plays that can support this include:

- Just start taking action (Play D1)
- Map the landscape of interventions (Play D2)
- Assess individual interventions (Play D3)
- Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess the current landscape of interventions (Play D4)
- Use the Wave to visualise the current landscape of interventions (Play D5)




## Drawing on the other Dimensions

**Objectives and strategy** — Assess the landscape of current interventions against your objectives and desired impact.

**Ecosystem** — Work with stakeholders to understand what interventions are currently happening and with whom; look at the capabilities of stakeholders and where that could help design and deliver new interventions.

**Local needs** — Use your understanding of the local needs to inform your assessments and compare the landscape of interventions against local needs and target groups.

## Self-assessing your Dimensions

This simple self-assessment will help you establish where to start when using the Framework and Plays, by identifying which Dimensions are most and least developed in your context.

The reality is that you can start with any Dimension when strengthening your local approach. There are many different entry points into using the Framework to strengthen the four Dimensions. This depends on your circumstances – how developed your strategy is, what your ecosystem is like, how much you have data on local needs, what set of interventions you have etc.

All Dimensions are important. There is no “right” starting place. After the self-assessment you can look at the purpose of each Play to decide if it might be useful for you, and consider if it’s the right moment to use it.

## Considerations

- You could collaborate with any existing teams and stakeholders when doing this, to get a shared picture.
- You could also start by asking stakeholders to do the self-assessment separately and then come together to compare results, and explore where the assessments are similar and where different. This could give interesting insights.
- Use the answers and scoring to decide which Dimensions you should look at strengthening first, using the Plays.

This self-assessment is designed to give you a quick overview on where the biggest gains may be found. The least developed Dimension is the obvious place to start, but discuss this locally and consider any extra local factors that are not included in the self-assessment. It is intended as a quick way to get some structured insights, as inputs into the decision-making process.

## Self-Assessment Process

Each Dimension has six statements. Read and consider each statement and decide how much you would agree with it in your local context. Score each statement between 1 and 5 as follows:

**5 = strongly agree**

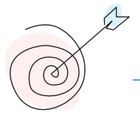
**4 = agree**

**3 = neither agree nor disagree**

**2 = disagree**

**1 = strongly disagree**

Add up the scores from each set of statements a) to f) to give a score out of 30 for each Dimension. You could plot these on a star/spider diagram (or other chart) for a visual representation. Compare the Dimensions to provide an initial idea about where you may be strongest, and identify which particular Dimension(s) may need more work or may be a better starting point for using the Plays.



| Dimension A – Refining Objective and Strategy | Score |
|---|---|
| a. We have a defined Digital Inclusion **Strategy in place** already | |
| b. We know and **use the various user profiles** in our city when defining our digital inclusion strategy and approach | |
| c. We have Digital inclusion as a **cross-cutting theme in other strategies** (e.g. in our smart city strategy or municipal digital transformation strategy) | |
| d. Our strategy is **based on consultation** and review with relevant stakeholders | |
| e. Our strategy or approach targets a **wide range of profiles** (i.e. more than just the most vulnerable or obvious groups) | |
| f. Our strategy or approach takes account of the various **causes** of digital exclusion locally and makes deliberate decisions about which causes to target | |



| Dimension B – Building a Stakeholder Ecosystem | Score |
|---|---|
| a. We have attempted to **map** all the service providers active in the field of digital inclusion | |
| b. We are in regular contact with **other organisations or departments** who provide digital inclusion support or programmes | |
| c. We deliver some interventions in **partnership with others**, or as part of a defined network or organisations | |
| d. We have **identified and addressed gaps** in the stakeholder ecosystem | |
| e. There is a **formal structure agreed partnership for collaboration** or coordination of digital inclusion activities | |
| f. There is active **political support** for digital inclusion activities in the city | |



| Dimension C – Better understanding local needs | Score |
|---|---|
| a. We have reviewed the **prevalence of known risk factors** in our community | |
| b. We have **sought specific additional data** to better understand the scale of local needs | |
| c. We know the **specific profiles** of who is digitally excluded in the city | |
| d. We have **spoken with key target groups** to understand their needs and what barriers they are actually facing. | |
| e. We regularly **share data with/from** partner organisations on digital exclusions and local digital needs | |
| f. We have **mapped spatially** the correlation of risk factors and cross referenced it with other data | |



| Dimension D – Strengthening Interventions | Score |
|---|---|
| a. We know all the digital inclusion support or **interventions** that are currently happening in our city | |
| b. We know **which user profiles are targeted** by the existing interventions | |
| c. We know **which causes of digital exclusion are targeted** by the existing interventions | |
| d. We are clear about the causes and user profiles that are **currently not addressed** and/or supported | |
| e. We know the **impact and quality** of the existing interventions in the city e.g. through effective monitoring & assessment, or qualitative feedback | |
| f. We have explored existing databases of **good practice** for digital inclusion interventions | |

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Part 3:

# “The Plays” – Refine your local approach to tackling digital exclusion

## Introduction to the Plays

On their own, the individual Plays are short interventions that can help with a specific aspect of development. Some draw on common urban development principles, (such as stakeholder working) whereas others are more bespoke to the digital inclusion context, such as those that use the 8 Causes Matrix or the Wave as analysis tools.

Many of the Plays draw on the Wave and Matrix at the heart of our ‘new Framework for tackling digital exclusion’ in subtly different ways to help you develop your approach and strengthen a particular Dimension of your digital inclusion practice. The Wave and Matrix in particular are flexible tools. They can be used and combined in a wide variety of ways, sometimes quite nuanced and complex. As a result, some Plays look quite similar, but have a different focus. For example the Wave is used in Plays in section A to help review a strategic approach, and also in Plays in section D to help review actions in a plan.

The Plays are presented in a common structured format for ease of use and comparison:




**What is the Play?**

The essesnce of the Play

**Useful for...**

Why are we proposing this play?

**Dimension**

Which Dimension the Play is intended to strengethen

**Practical tips**

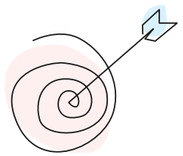
What are the things to do? (How to use it - practical things to do / ways you can use it)

**Take into account**

- What to think about? (Considerations)
- Potential pros and cons of using this particular Play

**Illustrative Examples**

Case Examples to help understand what the Play looks like in practice

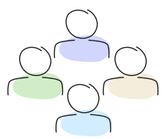


## A. Refining Objective and Strategy

**Play A1**
Use the Wave model to assess your strategic approach

**Play A2**
Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess your strategic approach

**Play A3**
Use the full Digi-inclusion Framework to assess and strengthen your approach



## B. Building a Stakeholder Ecosystem

**Play B1**
Map the ecosystem of providers

**Play B2**
Bring together the ecosystem of providers

**Play B3**
Sign a local agreement



## C. Better understanding local needs

**Play C1**
Review and analyse existing data

**Play C2**
Create spatial maps

**Play C3**
Conduct a broad survey

**Play C4**
Run targeted surveys

**Play C5**
Facilitate targeted focus groups

**Play C6**
Use personas to explore local at-risk profiles



## D. Strengthening Interventions

**Play D1**
Just start taking action

**Play D2**
Map the range of current interventions

**Play D3**
Assess individual interventions

**Play D4**
Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess the current landscape of interventions

**Play D5**
Use the Wave to visualise the current landscape of interventions

Play A1

# Use the Wave model to assess your strategic approach

## What is the Play?

Use the Wave of Digitalisation model / metaphor to help think about local digital exclusion from new broader perspectives, considering how different profiles experience digital exclusion and where you want to focus

## Useful for...

- **Challenging entrenched ways** of thinking about digital exclusion.
- **Reframing discussions** with stakeholders and partners.
- **Enabling a more nuanced view** of digital exclusion locally, including those groups only partly excluded but still with support needs.
- **Starting to create a digital inclusion strategy for the first time**
- **Understanding better** who your local strategy is focussed on, or should focus on.

## Practical tips

- Think about how current priorities apply to the model. Look at all four profiles, and identify which groups you are currently focussed on and why. Are any profiles missing from the current strategy?
- Think about what objectives could apply to the different user profiles on the wave. Are local objectives for the different profiles currently clear?
- Use the wave model to identify user profiles that you need to understand better or in more detail (feeding into Dimension C. Better Understanding Local Needs’)
- Print the wave out on a large piece of paper to facilitate interactive exercises with sticky notes, cards, labels/stickers etc.
- Different people will have different opinions or viewpoints on the different profiles - embrace this and explore the different views... it might lead to new insights!

## Take Into account

- This Play can be used at multiple points - it can be a useful place to start to start a new way of looking at digital exclusion locally, but also can be revisited at later points to check alignment or to reassess priorities.
- It can be helpful just to explore what insights the Wave gives you, and what questions it raises. Other Plays can then help you to take further action on this.
- You can start with internal team discussions and/or use it with a broader range of stakeholders, including local policy makers or delivery partners.
- Often the focus tends to be on the “digitally sinking” profile, but it is important to consider all the profiles, as others can be equally valid for focus, and can be just as important in many cases.
- Consider also that impact and change can be easier to achieve when working with the digitally struggling and digitally surviving profiles.
- You can use this Play both to review a current approach, and/or to start building a new strategy.

## Illustrative Examples

Digi-inclusion

Play A2

# Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess your strategic approach

## What is the Play?

Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess which causes are targeted by your current strategy and whether it gives the preferred balance for the local situation

## Useful for...

To check if your current strategy is focussed on (all) the causes of digital exclusion in your city and (all) the groups affected, to inform your future strategy. It can give you:

- **A more detailed understanding** of which groups you are targeting already, and importantly, any groups that might have not been considered or have unmet needs.
- **A more nuanced understanding** of the different causes of digital exclusion and how your current approach does/doesn’t target these, and whether there is an alternative focus to achieve greater impact.

## Practical tips

- Work with your team and/or stakeholders to consider each of the 8 causes, and how they manifest digital exclusion in your city for different groups.
- Use the 8 Causes Matrix to think about which causes your strategy / approach focusses on (and why).
- Be clear about the difference between the causes on the ‘individual side’ of the Matrix and those on the ‘system side’ – but also remember that it is not a perfect categorisation and there will be some ‘grey areas’ with crossover.
- Think about which causes you can control, which you can maybe influence, and which you have limited or no control or influence over - design your strategic objectives around targeting the causes you wish to focus on.

## Take Into account

- It can often be best to start this Play with a small team, before expanding it to include a wider group of stakeholders / partners.
- The Matrix is a thinking tool to help you consider the situation and how the causes manifest in your city, not a hard and fast set of categories with rigid boundaries.
- Think about whether you can achieve better impact for the available resources by focussing your strategy on the areas you can genuinely control of influence.
- You may need to consider whether you have the local insights about the real nature of the different causes in your territory. You can use this Play to identify gaps in data / understanding.
- If you do not have a strategy for digital inclusion yet, consider starting with some of the ‘D’ Plays to review the set of Interventions you currently have in place.

## Illustrative Examples

Digi-inclusion | Torres Vedras

**Play A3**

# Use the full Digi-inclusion Framework to assess and strengthen your approach

## What is the Play?

Assess your priorities, strategic objectives, and broad areas of intervention against both the Wave profiles and the 8 Causes Matrix, to build a complete visual representation of your strategic approach

## Useful for...

- **Visualising** your strategy.
- Building a common **strategic overview** with partners and stakeholders.
- When you wish to create a **coherent strategy** for your digital inclusion work.
- Crafting a strategy with an **integrated approach** and objectives.
- When you have a strategy already but want to **review who it supports** and consider other groups and causes.

## Practical tips

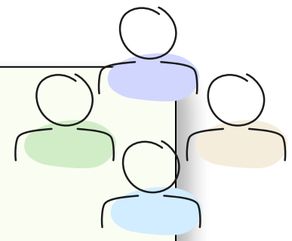
- Work with your team and/or stakeholders to consider each Wave user profile and the causes that affect them, if and where you have them in your city, and whether they should be (considered as) a focus for your digital inclusion work.
- Use a large printout of the wave to physically map out your objectives and broad areas of intervention.
- Plot the objectives and intervention areas that address the “system-side” causes underneath the wave surface; plot those that address the “individual-side” causes above the wave surface (water under the wave = the changing digital world; above the wave = the people interacting with that changing digital world).
- Draw links and identify gaps in the approach – decide if these need further attention or review.
- Design your strategic objectives around supporting the profiles / target groups and causes you wish to focus on – this provides a basis on which to design specific interventions and actions plans.

## Take Into account

- This Play is easier to use once people are familiar with using both the Wave and the Matrix concepts.
- By combining the Wave and Matrix and using them together, you can go deeper into the local context and approach and explore this with more nuance and detail.
- The Matrix can be broadly overlayed onto the Wave when considering everything together: top half of the Matrix = above the Wave, bottom half of the Matrix = below the Wave. This can sometimes be helpful to cluster objectives or areas of intervention and hence see the focus and gaps.

## Illustrative Examples

**Digi-inclusion**



**Play B1**

# Map the ecosystem of providers

## What is the Play?

Identify (potential) stakeholders and partners, and use tools to map and analyse all the providers currently working on digital inclusion in your city / territory

## Useful for...

- **Getting an overview** of who is already active on digital inclusion.
- **Visualising** the organisations working across your territory.
- **Identifying gaps** in the ecosystem of providers.
- **Identifying potential duplications** and overlaps in what is already being offered.
- **Preparing to improve collaboration** as part of an enhanced ecosystem approach.

## Practical tips

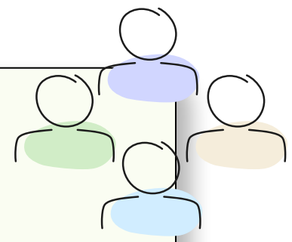
- This mapping can be geographical (locations) or thematic (types of intervention) or others e.g. using spatial mapping to plot organisations by location, or an ecosystem map to plot the ecosystem, by sector or intervention theme etc.
- This Play is specifically about understanding who is out there – it's the first step to building an ecosystem of partners.
- Connect with stakeholders to understand their organisation, their main areas of work, and where they are based.
- Use new and existing contacts to find out about others and get introduced.
- Use the opportunity to let them know what you are doing and start to warm them up to being more connected to other work.
- Combine or follow with Play B2, to start to bring stakeholders together.

## Take Into account

- This Play can be enhanced by physically mapping them using GIS or manually, to provide a clearer geographical view of the providers.
- Consider also overlaying different layers of information, e.g. thematic layered over a geographical e.g. their target groups, their types of intervention, their organisation type etc. shown on the map of the territory.
- If you are new to the topic but organisations in the territory are more experienced, consider carefully how you approach them – people can sometimes be suspicious of a municipality's motivations for suddenly taking an interest!

## Illustrative Examples

Gdańsk | Boulogne-sur-mer | Zenica-Doboj Canton



**Play B2**

# Bring together the ecosystem of providers

## What is the Play?

Engage with people to connect the network of stakeholders and build a coalition of partners from within your local digital inclusion ecosystem

## Useful for...

- **Building the foundations** to ensure work in the territory is joined up and integrated.
- **Breaking out of siloed working**.
- **Sharing your knowledge** and experience with the wider ecosystem.
- **Building relationships** with key partners and stakeholders.
- **Involving new people**, skills and knowledge.

## Practical tips

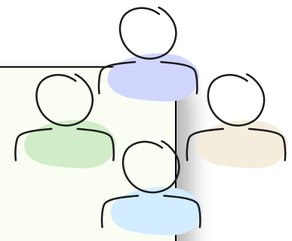
- This Play is about deeper engagement with stakeholders once you already know who they are – make deeper contact with them, explore opportunities and potential conflicts, and build relationships.
- When onboarding new stakeholders into an existing local group, consider using bilateral meetings to bring them into the process and manage expectations.
- Talk to them to find out about their priorities, their challenges etc.
- Think about what you can offer them as well as what they offer you – look for the win-win collaborations!
- Approach them early to include them in the process.
- Where possible, share what data and insights you have and seek to pool knowledge for the benefit of the whole ecosystem.

## Take Into account

- Lots of different stakeholders will each have a piece of the puzzle – connecting them helps to bring all those pieces together.
- There will likely be other people or organisations already working to tackle digital exclusion, but they may not all be connected or aware of the work of each other – use this Play to help address this.
- Remember other departments in your own organisation are important. You may need to spend time building connections and trust there too.
- Different stakeholders will have different aims, ways of working, and levels of interest. Remember to adjust your approach with each one and that a one size fits all approach is rarely the best.

## Illustrative Examples

**Boulogne-sur-mer** **Gdańsk** **Roeselare**



**Play B3**

# Sign a local agreement

## What is the Play?

Using a memorandum of understanding (MoU), local charter, or manifesto to local charter or manifesto to help formalise collaboration for better joined-up working in the longer term

## Useful for...

- **Building upon the foundations** of existing working relationships to ensure ongoing collaboration and partnership.
- **Creating visible commitments** between partners, that can also be used as communications tools to encourage others.
- **Building momentum** around common goals or common values.
- **Ensuring a shared vision** is clearly agreed and articulated.
- **Ensure commitment to working together** on digital inclusion remains strong.

## Practical tips

- Short, simple agreements are best to start with.
- Chose a format that works for your context; adapt the agreements to suit.
- MoUs, Charters, Regional Manifestos can all be used, either as commitments to act on certain themes, or to show commitment to a set of shared values or principles – start with common ground
- Try to create agreements that allow each organisation to easily align it with their (often different) missions – start with “open-ended, long-lasting cooperation”
- Set out broad goals, a shared vision that everyone can get behind
- Build on existing (successful) bilateral agreements when building a wider partnership agreement

## Take Into account

- The success of MoUs often lies in their simplicity – keep them easy to implement in the first instance; more complicated agreements require greater trust and alignment.
- Avoid forcing too many conditions on partners through formal agreements; making it too specific can add clarity, but can also make it harder to gain agreement.
- Be aware of political considerations and implications when developing agreements.

## Illustrative Examples

**Lepida** **Roeselare**

Play C1

# Review and analyse existing data

## What is the Play?

Gather and analyse existing data sources (demographic, socio-economic, digital…) from local, regional and national levels to build a clearer picture of digital exclusion locally

## Useful for…

- **Estimating the extent** of local digital exclusion.
- **Identifying the most prevalent local risk factors** (e.g. ageing, unemployment, lack of broadband coverage…).
- **Identifying priority target groups** (e.g. young unemployed, older people, rural populations…).
- **Informing more targeted interventions** - responding to identified risk factors.

## Practical tips

- Start with available local authority data on e.g. housing, social care, education
- Seek out open data sources, e.g. national or regional statistics:
- Look for data on the established risk factors for digital exclusion (see Part 1).
- Try to obtain available internet connectivity data from national open sources or private companies - e.g. broadband access, 4G/5G coverage, connected households.
- Engage partners – ask voluntary groups, housing associations, libraries, schools etc what data they hold that can enrich your picture (see Play B2).
- Make sure you have the skills and resources available to do the data analysis and interpretation work – engage researchers or data analysts if needed.
- Follow up the identification of the prevalent at-risk groups with Plays C4, C5 or C6 to seek more targeted understanding of the experienced reality of these groups.
- Be careful when using or combining personal or sensitive datasets to respect privacy and ethics responsibilities.

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Cost-effective – uses existing resources before commissioning new research.<br>■ Relatively quick and easy way to improve knowledge base and targeting.<br>■ The process of data sharing can already encourage collaboration between local partners. | ■ Limited by the data available and knowledge gaps will remain.<br>■ Data may be outdated or too high-level to show local patterns.<br>■ The relevance of the data is largely based on assumptions about risk factors, rather than confirmed experience.<br>■ Requires some data literacy or analytical capacity to interpret effectively |

## Illustrative Examples

Mollet del Vallès | Zenica-Doboj Canton

Play C2

# Create spatial maps

## What is the Play?

Use mapping tools to generate a visual picture of digital exclusion risks across your area. Maps are built with multiple datasets and users should be able to freely select and view any specific combination

## Useful for...

- **Visualising where groups most at risk** of digital exclusion are likely to be located.
- **Overlaying multiple data sets** to highlight areas where local residents are facing multiple risks.
- **Identifying possible pockets** of exclusion located in areas that don’t follow administrative boundaries.
- **Assessing whether the spatial distribution** of services matches the spatial presentation of needs.

## Practical tips

- This is best done using GIS software, but can also be approximated with simple mapping tools
- Seek people with the relevant skills for building an effective and accurate spatial map.
- Good practice is to combine mapping of risk factors with mapping of local community assets, such as libraries and other services to identify mismatches.
- Keep adding datasets as additional layers. Start with the freely available data and use that to identify data gaps where more data and/or research might be needed.
- Follow up mapping with more targeted approaches to better understand needs in locations that seem to be particularly at risk (e.g. Plays C4, C5, C6))

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Makes complex data easy to understand and communicate visually.<br>■ Allows to explore the combination of diverse risk factors.<br>■ Can show where at-risk groups fall across established geographical or administrative boundaries. | ■ Requires specific skills and mapping tools - can be time consuming and expensive.<br>■ Risk of over-reliance on incomplete or outdated datasets.<br>■ May just confirm what is already known locally about areas of socio-economic disadvantage. |

## Illustrative Examples

**Boulogne-sur-mer**



**Play C3**

# Conduct a broad survey

## What is the Play?

Design and run a general survey to generate a large data sample on local residents’ digital access, skills, confidence, and usage patterns

## Useful for...

- **Going beyond standard assumptions** to build a picture of what digital exclusion really looks like locally.
- **Building an understanding** of how digital exclusion impacts a broad spectrum of the population and the extent of the challenges.
- **Identifying specific local trends**, risk factors, barriers and needs of local people.
- **Establishing baseline data** for local digital exclusion to be tracked over time.
- **Generating data on specific questions**/topics where data is missing.

## Practical tips

- Can be done by in-house teams or commissioned to external agencies.
- Make sure you use skilled survey designers to create good quality surveys that deliver meaningful responses. Consider exploiting existing survey templates.
- Ensure it is meaningful and asking questions to which you want to know the answer - including about the causes (not just the manifestations) of exclusion.
- Keep it short and accessible - consider offering, paper and assisted formats and collection in multiple locations. Excluded groups will struggle to access online surveys.
- Think about whether any selected data collection methods (e.g. face-to-face survey outside a supermarket, online survey...) automatically exclude certain groups. Consider using specific approaches to reaching under-represented groups.
- Make sure you have the resources not only to carry out large sample surveys, but to effectively process and analyse the results - and to repeat the process over time.

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Provides credible and detailed data for decision-makers and the public.<br>■ Provides an overall picture of the extent of local exclusion and key trends.<br>■ Local, evidence-based picture rather than generalised information.<br>■ Provides basis for tracking change/ progress over time. | ■ Likely expensive and time consuming to get a truly representative sample.<br>■ Data may not add new insights - only confirm known risk factors.<br>■ Requires specific survey, research and analysis skills.<br>■ Unable to ask follow-up questions to understand people’s answers.<br>■ Limited value if it can’t be repeated over time. |

## Illustrative Examples

**Mollet del Vallès**



**Play C4**

# Run targeted surveys

## What is the Play?

Run smaller, focused surveys with specific target groups in the community - identified by risk factor, profile or location - e.g. older adults, people with disabilities, residents in a disadvantaged community

## Useful for...

- **Understanding better the specific barriers and needs** of local groups at risk of digital exclusion - beyond broad assumptions.
- **Increased tailoring of support** for specific groups, including those already targeted by policy or interventions.
- **Understanding better the lived experience** of digitally excluded people locally.

## Practical tips

- Methodology is similar to broad surveys but the targeting is very different - still need to ensure a representative sample size.
- Go to where your target groups are in order to reach them.
- Make use of intermediaries (service providers, associations, NGOs...) who can help you reach the specific groups in question.
- Take account of the accessibility needs of your target groups (e.g. language & literacy, format, cultural sensitivity, time & comfort, privacy & trust....). Consider using multiple formats.
- Design questions to explore the causes of exclusion (barriers, preferences, wants and needs) - and not just the manifestations of exclusion (e.g. frequency of access).
- Consider whether a focus group discussion (Play C5) would give more meaningful inputs.

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Easier to target questions to identify more specific needs and barriers.<br>■ More likely to yield new insights and understanding of specific groups than broad surveys.<br>■ More resource efficient than broad surveys.<br>■ Helpful for designing interventions that meet specific target group needs. | ■ Can still be time consuming and costly.<br>■ Requires survey and analysis skills.<br>■ Risks of survey fatigue or misunderstanding of questions.<br>■ Unable to ask follow-up questions to understand people’s answers or dig more deeply into emerging topics. |

## Illustrative Examples

Alexandroupolis | Gdańsk | Iași | Torres Vedras

Play C5

# Facilitate targeted focus groups

## What is the Play?

Hold small group discussions with specific communities to explore digital inclusion experiences in depth, including the lived experience, preferences, wants, barriers, motivations and ideas

## Useful for...

- **Getting detailed, qualitative insights** about a specific pre-identified target group.
- **Building on existing data and knowledge** about local exclusions to understand better underlying causes and needs.
- **Helps co-design and focus interventions** by exploring needs and preference in detail.
- **Diving deeper into issues** of concern to target groups.
- **Understanding the lived experience** of those suffering digital exclusions.

## Practical tips

- Keep sessions informal and welcoming - offer incentives and refreshments.
- Set boundaries, clarify expectations, and reassure participants about confidentiality.
- Skilled facilitation is key to inclusive discussions.
- Consider working with local partners who are already used to engaging with (and trusted by) your selected target group to facilitate discussions.
- Groups need to be small enough to enable all participating voices to be heard.
- Make sure you know and understand how representative your group is and avoid drawing conclusions that are too broad.
- The more focus group discussions you can hold, the better picture you will be able to develop.

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Enables you to explore initial responses in more detail than a survey allows.<br>■ Discussions can better reflect and build upon target group concerns.<br>■ Provides rich detail to better understand underlying causes, barriers and needs.<br>■ Tailored responses and services can start to be co-designed with participants. | ■ Requires good facilitation skills, especially with vulnerable and at-risk groups<br>■ Risks being unrepresentative with small groups or dominated by a few strong voices.<br>■ Requires time and resources |

## Illustrative Examples

Alexandroupolis | Mollet del Vallès | Torres Vedras | Iași



**Play C6**

# Use personas to explore local at-risk profiles

## What is the Play?

Create realistic profiles of ‘typical’ residents with different digital inclusion challenges in the community

## Useful for...

- **Supporting discussions and reflections** on user needs and tailored responses.
- **Helping staff and partners to empathise** with and explore the needs of diverse user needs.
- **Challenging pre-conceptions** and narrow understandings of what digital exclusion is, who it affects and how.
- **Highlighting the needs of ‘forgotten’ groups** not currently targeted by existing support provision.

## Practical tips

- You can start with ‘generic’ or ‘pre-defined’ digital personas, but these should be adapted to local realities as much as possible.
- Include stories, motivations, barriers about the experience of digital exclusion, not just demographic data and profiling.
- Build tailored community personas, based on both data and community insight - and test them with frontline workers or residents for realism.
- Tools like Empathy Mapping can support creation and validation with stakeholders.
- Think about profiles all along the Wave of Digitalisation - including not only digitally sinking, but also digitally struggling and surviving.
- Include personas that can challenge pre-conceptions e.g. someone who is regularly connected to the internet, but lacks high-level professional digital skills.
- Where possible, validate your personas against real data or insights from actual people who can offer lived experience of the issues.

**Take Into account.** There are pros and cons to this Play:

| PROs | CONs |
|---|---|
| ■ Can make it easier for policymakers and practitioners to think about and empathise with diverse user needs.<br>■ Encourages human-centred design of services<br>■ Can help raise different perspectives and challenges assumptions | ■ Can make things too generic, losing minority lived experience<br>■ Risks of personas becoming stereotypes or oversimplifying the complex reality of individuals’ lived experience.<br>■ Takes time to co-design and validate properly<br>■ Risk of personas being mistaken for reality |

## Illustrative Examples

**Digi-inclusion**

Play D1

# Just start taking action

## What is the Play?

Deliver interventions to tackle digital exclusion based on assumptions about local needs e.g. known at-risk groups, common causes of exclusion

## Useful for...

- **Starting to make progress without delay** in situations where you lack the time or resources for more detailed assessments of local needs.
- **Gaining momentum and impact**, which can then be refined in the future through data and learning from the experience on the ground.
- **Supporting groups you know have unmet needs**, even if this is not based on solid data.
- **Making use of established knowledge** and practice when resources for local research are limited.

## Practical tips

- If you have no specific data, you can take action based on the typical needs of groups who are likely to be more at risk – based on research and knowledge from elsewhere.
- Certain interventions will likely have positive effects in most situations e.g. support for older people to gain better digital skills is an almost universal intervention.
- Explore databases of good practice for interventions which have been shown to be effective in other local contexts.
- The most commonly identified at-risk groups are:
  - People with low educational attainment
  - Older people, especially where they didn’t learn digital skills for work
  - Low-income groups (including the unemployed)
  - Residents of isolated (rural) communities
  - People with disabilities
  - People who are recent refugees
  - Migrants from less developed contexts

## Take Into account

- The phenomenon of digital exclusion is such that there are some common unmet needs and common at-risk groups, which feature in the vast majority of territories, in some form or another.
- Being in one of these groups does not guarantee digital exclusion, but it does increase the statistical likelihood - especially when factors overlap (e.g. older people in rural areas, or unemployed people with disabilities).
- There are many examples of interventions that can be selected and applied without much specific tailoring to local context.

## Illustrative Examples

Lepida

Play D2

# Map the landscape of current interventions

## What is the Play?

Carry out research to identify what interventions and support are being offered already within your territory

## Useful for...

- **Building the picture** of what practices are already happening.
- **Identifying the topics** / areas that are covered e.g. by target groups, by causes, by type.
- **Identifying areas of concentration and duplication** within the current offer of support.
- **Identifying gaps and omissions** within the current offer of support.

## Practical tips

- This could be carried out through a specific and time controlled piece of research, whether commissioned to someone external or carried out in-house.
- Another simpler option is to build up the mapping gradually over time - recording interventions and services as you become aware of them.
- Link to Plays B1 and B2 both to help identify existing interventions and to understand which organisations are working in the area and to build the ecosystem approach
- Consider mapping the offered services spatially and correlating it with any mapping of needs and risk factors that you already have (Play C2)

## Take Into account

- If needed, this can be a quick first step just to build a picture, without getting into the details of all the interventions and stakeholders.
- Building the initial picture is the first step, however established relationships may be needed with the relevant providers before carrying out more detailed analysis.
- Think about how services are offered over time as well as by location e.g. are all services offered during working hours or during holiday periods.
- Some service providers may be reluctant to share commercially sensitive information on the details of what they offer.
- It can be interesting to see whether similar services have different levels of take-up and to investigate the reasons behind it e.g. different levels of awareness, or location.

## Illustrative Examples

Zenica Doboj-Canton | Gdańsk | Torres Vedras

Play D3

# Assess individual interventions

## What is the Play?

Use the 8 Causes Matrix and the Wave User Profiles to evaluate a specific intervention in terms of who and which causes of digital exclusion it addresses

## Useful for...

- **Evaluating the focus of an intervention** or projects.
- **Understanding if an intervention targets** who and what you expect it to.
- **Informing refinement or adjustment** of existing interventions to better meet real needs.
- **Starting to build an overall picture** of interventions in your area (see also Play D4).

## Practical tips

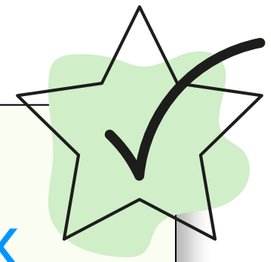
- To assess an intervention using the 8 Causes Matrix simply consider each cause, and mark whether the intervention addresses the cause directly or not.
- Then consider each of the Wave profiles and assess which one(s) the intervention is targeting.
- Use the combination of the two and build a picture of the intervention that can help to understand and/or communicate its purpose and impact to others.
- For causes, make the distinction between ‘directly addressing’ a cause and ‘indirectly impacting’ a cause - the latter is where the intervention may affect a cause but it isn’t the main aim and focus e.g. some efforts to target skills may also indirectly impact motivation..
- Print or prepare Intervention Cards with the 8 Causes Matrix on one side. Using one card per action, discuss and identify the causes of exclusion targeted by the action and add sticky dots to visually highlight your conclusions (e.g. green = directly addressed; amber = indirectly impacted). Eventually you will be able to combine cards to build an overall picture (see Play D4).

## Take Into account

- Most interventions tend to only directly address one or two causes
- The temptation is to diagnose that an intervention touches all causes because it can be argued that it has some effect on them all. Try to think about the purpose of the intervention and what the content/activities actually do directly.
- The reality of causes and interventions are complex and interlinked - this is not a perfect categorisation – sometimes it is unclear if or how much an intervention addresses a cause.
- The aim is not to have a perfect analysis, but to look at the actions through different windows and to discuss the observations –the debate and discussion helps everyone to understand the intervention better

## Illustrative Examples

Digi-inclusion | Torres Vedras



**Play D4**

# Use the 8 Causes Matrix to assess the current landscape of interventions

## What is the Play?

Aggregate the assessment of individual intervention assessments onto the 8 Causes Matrix

## Useful for...

- **Visualising the overall focus of actions** in your territory on the 8 causes.
- **Understanding if there is an imbalance** in the focus of interventions (vs needs) e.g. there may be some causes with many actions to address them, and/or some causes with few or none.
- **Working through with local stakeholders** to build up a shared understanding of the current landscape of interventions.

## Practical tips

- Carry out Plays D2 (mapping) and D3 (assessment of individual actions) before aggregating the results in this Play.
- Use a large format printout of the Matrix and sticky dots as for Play D3 – go through each individual action card and transfer or copy your stickers from each action to the large format Matrix –, to build up a “total” weighting of which causes are targeted by the range of interventions in your territory.
- Review whether any gaps or concentrations of focus are okay for your strategy, or if more / different interventions are needed.
- Discuss whether the balance of focus okay given the local priorities / strategy / objectives, then think about if you need to consider a different mix of interventions.

## Take Into account

- This gives a good overview of the number of actions tackling each cause, but not the impact of those actions or the number of people they affect.
- It is good for highlighting where your resources may be focused, and where there may be gaps.
- On its own, this analysis is interesting, but of lower value than if combined with other Plays - it works best as part of a wider process to analyse all your actions in different ways using the Wave and Matrix.

## Illustrative Examples

**Digi-inclusion**

Play D5

# Use the wave to visualise the current landscape of interventions

## What is the Play?

Plot all the interventions identified in your territory onto the Wave of Digitalisation, to consider the overall focus of actions by profile / target groups.

## Useful for...

- **Visualising a complete picture** of the actions already happening.
- **Working through with local stakeholders** to build up a shared understanding of the current landscape of interventions.
- **Visualising the expected focus** of a new or existing action plan.

## Practical tips

- Do this after you have analysed individual actions against the 8 Causes Matrix and Wave Profiles (Plays D2 and D3), ideally using Action cards
- Use a large form printout of the Wave and profiles – put each action on the chart according to its focus on a) individuals vs system (above the wave vs below it); and b) on sinking vs succeeding (on the left or right end of the wave). See the case example for more details.
- Think about where interventions might provide insights into the different profiles or personas in your territory.
- You can also use this approach to review a *proposed* strategy or action plan, to check it’s alignment with your strategy and objectives

## Take Into account

- Positioning actions on the Wave is not normally a perfect categorisation – be prepared for actions in two places, or some that don’t fit perfectly.
- Discussions (or arguments!) can happen when deciding where to put different interventions on the wave – this is helpful to understand the different viewpoints – treat the debate as an important part of the process!

## Illustrative Examples

Digi-inclusion



# THE CASE EXAMPLES

# The Case Examples

**Digi-inclusion Wave Cards method**
An integrated approach to reviewing digital inclusion action plans

**Iedereen digitaal Roeselare**
An Integrated and Strategic Approach to Digital Inclusion

**Mapping the ecosystem**
Getting to know which organisations are active in your territory

**Understanding the provider ecosystem**
Exploring who is already providing digital support (and building on what works)

**Mapping existing initiatives**
Getting a picture of what interventions are happening already

**A broad survey of local inhabitants**
Gathering data on the reality and extent of digital exclusion locally

**A local digital inclusion manifesto**
Creating common purpose and principles amongst stakeholders

**Pre-training needs assessments**
Finding out the needs of an existing group to test new interventions

**Digital facilitators**
Having people on hand to support, guide and help develop autonomy

**Wifi for all**
Filling the “not-spots” in the municipality

**Technology as a bridge**
Getting people started through training in basic digital skills

**Intergenerational programmes**
Training schemes for school students to support seniors in digital skills

**A targeted survey on the Catalan health system app**
Learning more about the reasons why people do or do not use the e-services available

**Digital on the move!**
Using a mobile classroom approach to reach rural communities

**Digital and disabilities**
Listening to people with disabilities

**Building trust and motivation**
Using alternative starting points to engage people in the digital world

# Explaining the Digi-inclusion Case Examples

The set of Case Examples is drawn from learning from all the Digi-inclusion network activities and research. They have been created from Project Partners and network activities, plus a few wider examples from across Europe.

Each Case Example is based on a story from a particular city, project partner, or situation. Case Examples highlight which of the Dimensions were strengthened, and which Plays they illustrate.



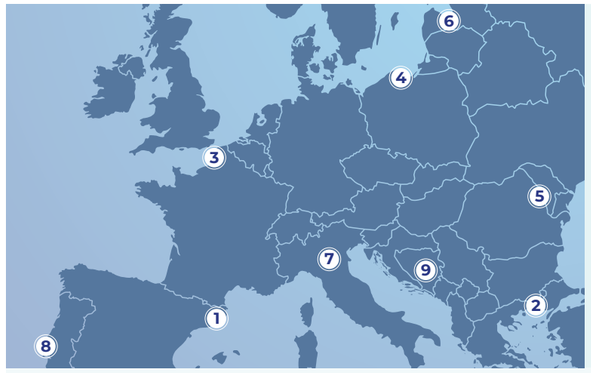

Where these tags appear it indicates an example of a particular Play being used in practice.

Case Examples illustrate the content and/or use of a particular Play, although in some cases the Digi-inclusion Play card itself may have been developed afterwards (because the Plays were developed as a result of learning and practices observed or developed within the network).

Case Examples are designed to help illustrate Plays and be considered alongside them, but also are stand-alone stories for inspiration and examples of practice. They are one way to apply the Play in practice - an illustration of how one local authority or organisation approached things. They are not intended as a model to copy paste without thought – they are intended to help understanding and to give ideas for adapting to your local context.

# Digi-inclusion Wave Cards method

## An integrated approach to reviewing digital inclusion action plans




Network insights and methods

**Delivered by:** Network Lead Expert

1 Mollet del Vallès - Spain 2 Alexandroupolis - Greece 3 Boulugne-sur-merr Développment Côte d'Opale - France
4 Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation - Poland 5 Iași - Romania 6 Jelgava Local Muinicipality - Latvia
7 Lepida ScpA - Italy 8 Torres Vedras - Portugal 9 Zenica-Doboj Canton - Bosnia-Herzegovina

## Dimensions Strengthened

- A. Refining **objectives** and strategy
- B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners
- C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**
- D. Improving **interventions**

## Background and needs

As part of the Digi-inclusion network, project partners undertook a peer review process of their draft Integrated Action Plans (IAP). However, simply reading and commenting someone else's plan felt like it would not be insightful enough for the complexity of digital exclusion.

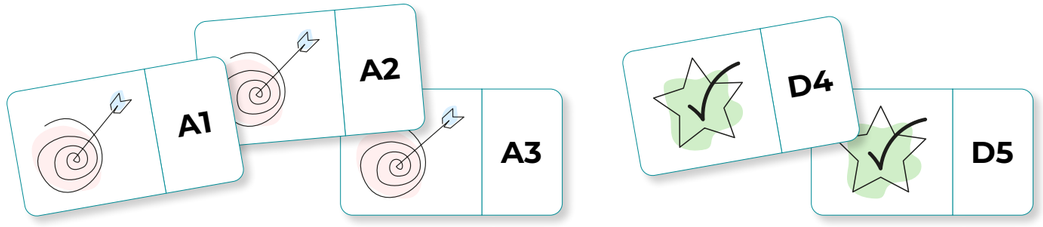
To address this, the URBACT Lead Expert designed an interactive, hands-on method using Wave model and the emerging 8 Causes Matrix. The approach enabled partners to assess each action individually and review their full action plans as a holistic system - checking for gaps, overlaps and how well their IAP targeted the main barriers faced locally.

The aim was to help Project Partners (PPs) understand what their actions were really doing, who they were targeting, and which causes of exclusion they were addressing – so they could adjust their plans with confidence

## Action taken

The activity took place during a transnational meeting in Boulogne-Sur-Mer in France in June 2025, with all nine Project Partners. The method followed four structured stages:

1. **Self-assess each action** against which causes it targets and which is impacts.
2. **Create an Wave Action Card for each action** in the IAP, capturing causes addressed and user profiles affected
3. **Map all the cards onto a "Wave Canvas"** to visualise the whole IAP
4. **Aggregate the impact on the 8 causes across the whole set of actions** to understand focus, clustering and gaps



## STEP 1 – Self-assessment

Before the meeting, PPs prepared by completing a template grid assessing each action against the 8 Causes. They identified:

- Primary Causes targeted – the direct, intention aim of the action
- Secondary or knock-on causes affected – areas where the action may have a partial or indirect impact

At the same time, they also assessed whether each action generate new data and insights about local digital exclusions – a distinct ninth category for the actions, reflecting the importance of better local evidence for digital inclusion work.

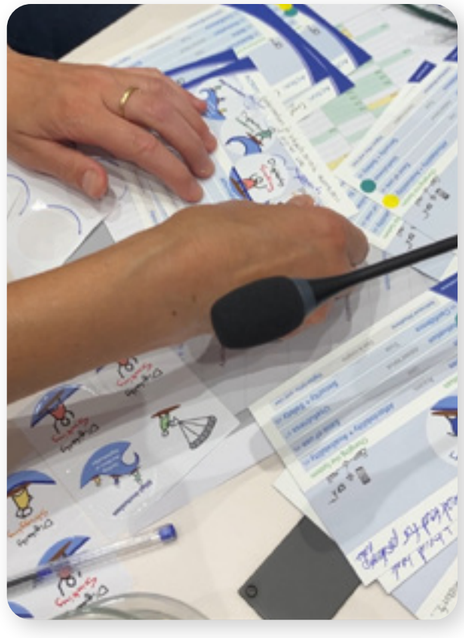
## STEP 2 – creating Wave Action Cards

During the meeting, PPs translated their assessments into "Wave Action Cards" – one for each action. They used coloured sticky dots for this:

- Large green dot = primary cause targeted
- Small yellow dot = secondary or indirect effect

PPs also considered each action in relation to which of the four User Profiles the action targeted, and used User Profile stickers to add this to the Wave Action Card.

This step sparked important group conversations, often revealing that the intended target group was not as clear as first assumed.



Many partners found themselves asking: "if don't target this cause, is that intentional or do we need to rethink our plan and action? This reflective dialogue inspired by the cards was one of the most valuable aspects of the method.

## STEP 3 – Building the Wave Canvas

Once all cards were created, each PP mapped them onto a "Digi-Inclusion Wave Canvas" on large A0 paper. The Canvas could be viewed as having two axes:

- **Cause Focus (y-axis)**: Whether the Action focusses more on Causes related to individuals (above the Wave) or the wider system and the digital world (below the wave)
- **Profile Focus (x-axis)**: Whether the Action targets the most excluded (Sinking end of the Wave) or those more connecting to the digital world (Succeeding end of the Wave).



Placing cards on Canvas gave each city a powerful visual snapshot – a "Local Wave" – showing clusters of actions, overall coverage, and blind spots / gaps. The lively debate around where each card should sit helped teams sharpen their understanding of the nuances between causes, interventions and user profiles

The resulting canvases showed their full IAP and enabled the full set of actions to be visualised and considered as a whole.

### STEP 4 – Aggregating the impact of the IAP

Finally partners aggregated all the dots from their cards onto an A4 version of the 8 Causes Matrix – literally "counting the dots" and plotting totals for each cause.

This created a simple but striking visual of where IAP focussed most effort. For many this prompted further reflection:

- Are we over-investing in one type of intervention?
- Where are the under-addressed causes?
- Does our plan match the needs we identified earlier in the network

This added an additional layer of insight to the overall review process.

## Learning and impact

Partners appreciated how the method helped them revisit assumptions and see their plans in a new light. The Wave Action Cards offered a clear visual summary of each action, an easy way to compare actions side-by-side, and a safe object for constructive debate.

One consistent learning was that most actions primarily target just one or two causes, even if them may indirectly influence others. The structured discussion helped recalibrate this understanding.

For example:

- A training session on using a laptop might clearly targets Cause #2: Skills; it might also increase motivation and trust as a secondary effect, but not being the primary aim.
- A course on online safety primarily targets Cause #4: Confidence in Safety, with secondary effect on skills or motivation.

This distinction helped PPs sharpen both their intentions and their descriptions. Some partners even rethought their whole approach as a result of the exercise. Lead Partner Mollet del Vallès re-evaluated which profiles they were focussing on, and realised that their actions were spread too broadly:

"Our vision was that all citizens in Mollet should benefit from the available digital opportunities" say Albert Garcia, project coordinator. "Now, we have changed our vision and challenge" added Marina Serrano, Mollet's ULG coordinator. "Now we will focus more on the ones who are most digitally excluded, not all citizens in the same way."

## The next steps

The Digi-inclusion PPs all took home new reflections help finalise their Integrated Action Plans. Several planned to repeat or share the activity with their local groups, stakeholders and politicians – broadening participation and fostering richer and more nuanced conversations about digital exclusion in their local context.

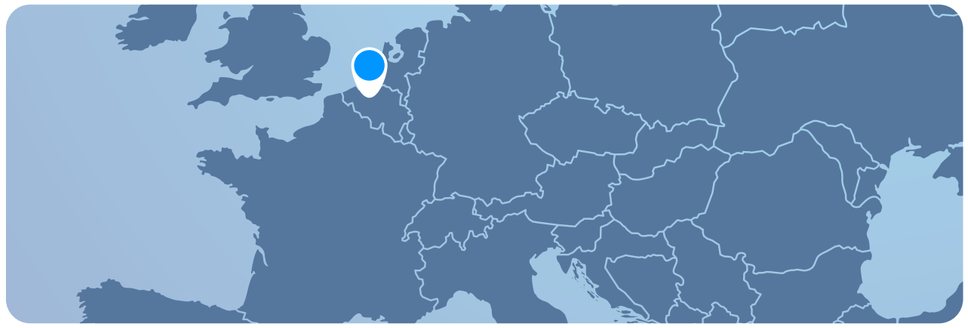
The method also demonstrated that the value of the Wave and 8 Causes Matrix as core tools for cities wanting a more strategic, balanced, and evidence-based approach to digital inclusion.

"We had already seen people responding well to 'The Wave' concept and the different insights the 8 Causes Matrix gave people" says Ian Graham, URABCT Lead Expert for the network. "Now we have tested it and can see the real practical value, we will be building a framework around this as part of the network's outputs."

And if you are reading this, you'll know: this method has now become a core part of the Digi-inclusion Playbook.

# Iedereen digitaal Roeselare

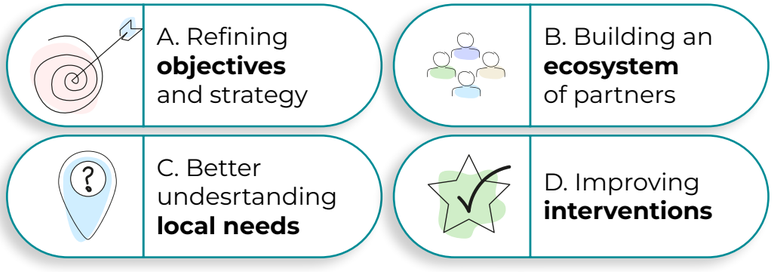
## An Integrated and Strategic Approach to Digital Inclusion



**City:** Roeselare (Belgium) | **Population:** 66 888

**Delivered by:** ARhus and City of Roeselare.

## Dimensions strengthened




## Background and needs

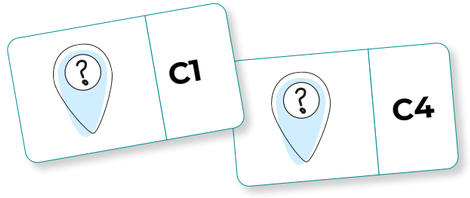
Iedereen Digitaal ("Everyone Digital") is an award-winning digital inclusion programme developed by the City of Roeselare in collaboration with local stakeholders. Led by Sandra Vanneste, the e-Inclusion coordinator at ARhus, the library and knowledge centre in the City of Roeselare, the Iedereen Digitaal programme was created to help address an identified need in the city. It is an excellent example of an holistic strategy / vision, translated into an integrated programme of support and interventions, delivered in partnership.

## Action taken

Under the banner, "No digital exclusion! Together we are building a digitally inclusive city" the programme brings together a wide range of support and intervention offers, along with coordinated "Digipunten" (Digi Points) that offer a more standardised support offer. Whilst targeted support and training etc. are offered to at risk and excluded groups, a key principle is that the service is universal and is available to everyone in Roeselare, Since the digital world evolves so quickly with new technologies such as AI, everybody might have some digital needs sooner or later.

Before the programme was set up, the KdG University of Applied Sciences and Arts was engaged to research the local situation and evaluate the digital exclusions present in the city. Questionnaires and focus groups with citizens and partners showed the needs of those excluded. This led to the programme being established about digital exclusion in Roeselare, around four "ambitions"

1. Internet access for all
2. Help and training for all
3. Digitally inclusive services for all
4. Building digital inclusion together






These were shaped by a policy group comprised of 20 members from various organisation and domains across the city.

At the centre of the programme is the Iedereen Digitaal “Charter” – this is a pledge that the partner organisations become signatories to, committing to the four ambitions, and signed by over 50 organisations in the city.

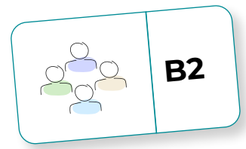



> “A charter helps to build awareness and to spread the movement. Digital inclusion is not something you can tackle alone. Beyond words, action is essential. Every organisation that signs the charter contributes actively, each in line with its own strengths and possibilities.” Sandra Vanneste

The final point of the Charter illustrates one of the big strengths of the programme - its collaborative partnership approach. Each of the delivery partners has their own speciality, from elderly support, to human rights, to education – but all are connected to each other through a shared mission on digital inclusion. This means that a much wider range of citizens come into contact with Iedereen Digitaal as a result, due to the wide range of possible entry routes.

Many citizens are initially engaged on digital inclusion when they contact one of the partners for something else they offer. Once in contact however, they can then been engaged and/or referred to other partner organisations and support services. Whilst someone might come into an office for housing advice, that discussion might highlight other digital exclusion - the connected nature of the programme means that their digital support needs can then be met through the wider partnership if needed.

Many partner organisations also now host one of the city’s many “Digi Points” as part of their offer as well. This has enabled residents to get support from a range of organisations located across the city. The Digi Points have a core offer that is similar across all locations, but they are also responsive to the needs of an individual and can support with their own specialism, or refer people to other partners for specific advice and support they don’t provide themselves.



## Learning and impact

Whilst not using the Digi-inclusions Plays, ARhus's development of this programme in Roeselare illustrates exactly the type of strategic and holistic approach that the Digi-inclusion Framework and Plays are intended to help develop – the methods and approach used to create and develop Iedereen Digitaal are the types of activities on which the Digi-inclusion Framework and Plays are based. This example serves as a best practice model for a holistic, strategic, and co-delivered digital inclusion programme.

And the numbers speak for themselves. In a city of just under 67,000 inhabitants, in 2024 the programme reached over 1000 citizens through intensive courses of education partners and 2577 persons via thematic activities, dealt with 2635 requests through the 13 Digi Points, including 5 new Digi Point locations being set up, and 68 households were helped to reduce the cost of their internet access, by an average of €31 per month!

> "You can have the most impressive set of actions, but if they don't reach the people who need them, you will not achieve your goal. That's why it is essential that the spirit of the Charter reaches as many (staff) members within each partner organisation as possible. As coordinator of the programme, I see communication as a key priority — not only towards citizens, but also towards the partners who are best placed to reach diverse groups of citizens." Sandra Vanneste

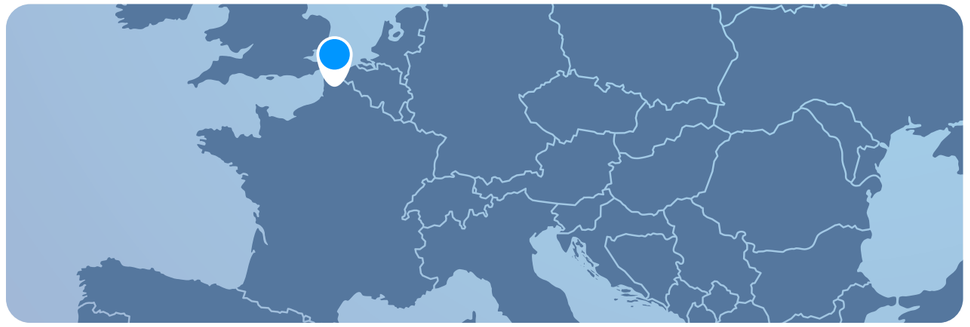
## The next steps

Iedereen Digitaal continues to evolve, with new partners signing the Charter, and now includes professional development for front line partner organisations and their staff. This is key to help stay up to date with digital needs, and to develop the skills of the digital facilitators who are working with citizens as new digital trends emerge as part of the next wave of digitalisation.

The strength of Idereen Digitaal lies in its holistic and integrated approach and its focus on developing meaningful partnerships around the shared mission pledged in the Charter.

# Mapping the ecosystem

## Getting to know which organisations are active in your territory



**City:** Boulogne-sur-mer (France) | **Population:** 157 976

**Delivered by:** Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale (BDCO) urban planning and economic development agency

### Dimensions strengthened

B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners

D. Improving **interventions**

### Background and needs

Together with local partners, Boulogne-sur-Mer's urban planning agency has been analysing initiatives supporting digital inclusion across its whole territory – using an interactive map produced by *Les assembleurs* – revealing a need to inform residents better about locally available digital services.

B1

"The idea is not to reinvent the wheel, but to provide information on existing digital support available across the territory to people who need it, via local public information desks in town halls," says Isabelle Watier, the agency's European project manager.

### Action taken

When the BDCO team started working with digital supporters in a new URBACT Local Group, they became increasingly aware of an active ecosystem of organisations tackling digital exclusion across the territory's towns, villages and rural communities.

B1

B2

"When we started to work with our stakeholders, we discovered they were also working with many relevant organisations, so we invited them as well. From a small web, we developed a bigger one," says Isabelle. "We very quickly noticed that there were many different initiatives on digital inclusion."



Analysing these digital support initiatives showed they ranged widely across the territory, from: stage one, assisted access – or 'do it for them' – for example Les maisons France Service; to stage two, guided use – 'do it with them' – with social centres' digital kiosks and facilitators; and stage three, training and empowerment – or 'teach them to do it' – provided by social centres, the IT resource centre CRIAC, and several other stakeholders.

However, this diverse offer is largely unknown to residents, and even to certain fellow providers of related digital services.

## Learning and Impact

**"How to inform people about nearby digital services that can answer their needs?"**

Boulogne-sur-Mer's urban and economic development agency realised they needed to find better ways to ensure people know about the digital services they can benefit from.

"Some citizens know what exists in their own municipality, but they don›t know that they could go just a couple of kilometres to the next town to access other services," says Isabelle. "There›s no point replicating services, but we can communicate more clearly about what is already available."

## The next steps

With this clearer picture, local partners are now identifying and planning awareness-raising solutions, such as:

- Create clear, informative leaflets for distribution in all town halls;
- Train front-desk staff to give residents the leaflet and other information about local digital services;
- Display posters linking to the digital support services map.

The next step, currently under discussion, will be to identify which team will be responsible for putting the new communication plan into action across the territory so that residents can benefit fully from the range of services already available.

# Understanding the provider ecosystem

## Exploring who is already providing digital support (and building on what works)



**City:** Gdańsk (Poland) | **Population:** 486 345

**Delivered by:** Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation, an NGO founded by the City of Gdańsk

## Dimensions strengthened

B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

## Background and needs

Gdańsk has plans for all its citizens to have full, equal access to well-designed, public digital services. In fact, by 2030 the aim is for 85% of public services to be online. However, although certain policies support citizen equality and inclusion, the city has no overarching digital inclusion strategy. Several years ago, Gdańsk developed policies supporting equality and citizen inclusion, but it still does not have a dedicated digital inclusion strategy. Many digital support initiatives launched by various NGOs and other entities have received financial support from the city over the years, but there are still no systemic, long-term solutions implemented across districts.

## Action taken

### Mapping Gdansk's digital support ecosystem

Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation decided to research and map Gdańsk's existing digital support providers and infrastructure. Revealing gaps, overlaps and potential synergies would be a valuable step towards making the city's digital service offer more inclusive.

The mapping would help identify good practices and ways for the city to strengthen this ecosystem, such as expanding digital support in local places already used by citizens.

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> "It's all about building on our strengths, and finding solutions that work already," says Aleksandra Abakanowicz, coordinator of the Digi-Inclusion project.

The team started by conducting desk research and talking to existing contacts, particularly members of the Digi-Inclusion URBACT Local Group (ULG). This gave a first list of key people and organisations helping residents keep up with digital transition. From this, Gdańsk identified three key groups to survey – libraries, neighbourhood houses and clubs, and NGOs supporting people with special needs.

## A survey for each target

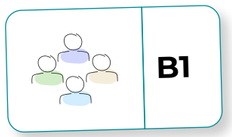
> “The survey was a starting point towards mapping the organisations that are actively supporting local communities, discovering their attitudes, struggles – and reflections on the digital needs of the residents they work with,” says Aleksandra. “And it was very, very important for us to understand their connections, who they cooperate with.”

Gdasnk’s 15-minute survey was slightly adapted to each of the three target groups. Questions explored services, staff, events and equipment, as well as the needs of digital support providers and their beneficiaries, from elderly people to job seekers to migrants.

| Structure targeted | How they were reached |
|---|---|
| Network of 25 local libraries, co-funded by the city and region | Centralised public library mailing list |
| ‘Neighbourhood houses’ – community centres run by NGOs and %100 funded by the city’s social support development budget | City hall email list |
| Independent NGOs working with people with special needs | Mainly through personal connections and ULG members |

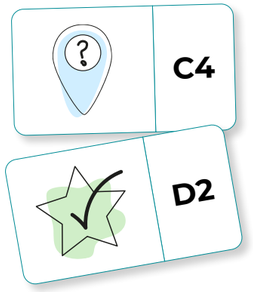
## Learning and impact

The ecosystem mapping revealed an array of existing support for residents, but also gaps in the city’s knowledge. This sparked further data-gathering.




> “We already know that there are quite a lot good examples of digital inclusion, but they are not part of a city system. We wanted to get more information on how we can build a city-wide system to support more people, and support existing services better,” says Anna Knoff, ULG (local group) Coordinator.

## Some key findings




**Ten informal digital support points** were identified, managed by various neighbourhood houses and clubs, NGOs and city services. Gdańsk hired a researcher to carry out individual in-depth interviews with people providing digital assistance, exploring aspects such as how they operate, financing, motivation, needs and challenges. This led to 50 pages of recommendations for the city – including good practices that can be shared and scaled up.

**Neighbourhood houses and clubs** were found to have great potential to play an even more active role in the digital inclusion ecosystem, particularly as they run on city funding. As a result, with advice from Barcelona University, Gdańsk held a focus group with six people working in neighbourhood houses and clubs – each with its own agenda and service offer. This also led to recommendations for further city action.

**Seniors** were identified by libraries and neighbourhood houses as the group needing most support in accessing digital services. As a result, Gdańsk prepared a further survey, this time for leaders of seniors clubs working with seniors, receiving about 50 answers. They followed this with a special survey of seniors at a popular annual picnic gathering about 1500 seniors.

During the pilot activities, it was not possible to gather sufficient information on the resources and needs of NGOs working with groups at risk of digital exclusion — this was identified as a task to be carried out in the future.




## Resulting recommendations

An array of recommendations resulted from the mapping and associated in-depth research. Here are some examples of actions recommended to reinforce the city's local network of digital support:

- Stable funding for digital support points
- Participatively developed city standards regarding the way digital support points are run, and key services that could be provided
- Possibly branding, with a trusted graphic identity for all digital support points
- A city-wide programme providing training for digital support staff and volunteers – and enabling them to meet and learn from each other
- Advice and support on tailoring services for seniors. Trust is a big challenge
- Equipment such as computers

## The next steps

### New knowledge sparked user-testing with seniors

Having gained a better understanding of seniors' needs, as well as connections with specialists in IT and digital training, Gdańsk was now able to take a further step towards improving digital inclusion. They invited seniors to test the usability of Gdańsk Contact Centre, the city's online service for citizens to report instances such as potholes, graffiti or illegally parked cars.

Seven user experience (UX) experts from local IT companies volunteered their time, together with three representatives from Gdańsk Contact Centre, and one from the city's senior citizen department.

Facilitated by an expert in running digital projects with seniors the 3.5 hour event led to three key outputs:

- 17 Seniors' recommendations for improving the online service. For example larger font size, clearer access to additional options, or extra time to input personal data.
- Evaluation of the event itself, to feed into future user testing of the city's public digital services.
- Recommendations for other organisations running digital events or courses for seniors.






"It was super great for everyone involved!" says Aleksandra, "The seniors said we should do it more often – they liked being part of the team! The UX experts learned a lot as most of them hadn't worked with seniors before. And Gdańsk Contact Centre gained valuable information to improve their digital services, and were inspired to rethink their approach."

**"We have a philosophy in Gdańsk that we give people the choice to gain the digital skills that they need. It's like a buffet with a lot of possibilities – you can choose what you want to take!"**

# Mapping existing initiatives

## Getting a picture of what interventions are happening already



**City:** Zenica-Doboj Canton (Bosnia & Herzegovina)

**Population:** 355 000

**Delivered by:** Regional Authority - Department for Development and International Projects

## Dimensions strengthened

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

D. Improving **interventions**

## Background and needs

This industrial region in Bosnia and Herzegovina covers nine municipalities and three cities. Its rural areas lack digital infrastructure, economic opportunities, and access to devices and skills. Unemployment is high (38%), and incomes and education levels remain low.

Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDC) wants to close this divide by improving broadband access, digital literacy, affordable devices, community hubs, and digital education in schools, supported by awareness campaigns that build public confidence.

> “Digital technologies are evolving rapidly, and the importance of digital literacy and lifelong learning cannot be stressed enough,” says Salih Alispahic, local project coordinato.

## Action taken

ZDC set out to review all digital literacy and skills programmes, identify gaps, and define improvements for a new Integrated Action Plan (IAP). Building on the Development Department’s participation in URBACT Digi-inclusion, these findings will shape the next seven-year development strategy

### Step 1. Understand low digital skills and literacy levels

In 2023 Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in its first International Computer and Information Literacy Study, assessing about 1 900 eighth-grade students from 106 primary schools. It revealed students were below the ICILS international average. With only basic skills in IT literacy, they lacked the ability to engage effectively with digital development.

In fact, a significant percentage of the country's population lacked digital skills. A 2024 national study on confirmed broader challenges: 24% of citizens had not used the internet in the previous three months; fewer than 3% of unemployed people showed more than basic digital literacy; and only 19% of students had advanced skills.




## Step 2. Identify and analyse existing programmes

ZDC set out to show how, and whether, educational resources and digital skills training programmes were addressing real digital skill gaps and needs across the region, helping define next steps for improvement.




ZDC set out to examine whether current digital education and training actually meet local needs. Their research focused on three questions:

1. What digital training resources and initiatives currently exist, and for whom?
2. What barriers limit access?
3. Where are the gaps in provision and content?

The testing methodology was designed to capture a broad range of perspectives. Data was collected using a mix of qualitative and secondary-data analysis. This included focus group discussions with education professionals, students, small business representatives, and digital literacy programme participants to gain insights into the effectiveness of existing programmes, as well as interviews with educational institutions, government officials, NGOs and industry professionals.




A range of impactful digital skills initiatives were revealed including specialised professional digital training for SMEs, students, teachers, and job-seekers, and hands-on learning for older adults – as well as improved material for IT teachers.




The research uncovered a range of impactful programmes – from SME-focused courses and teacher training to hands-on sessions for older adults. But it also highlighted other barriers: outdated school equipment, limited teacher training, poor coordination, and underfunding (especially in rural areas). NGOs noted the short-term nature of many programmes, while industry stakeholders stressed the mismatch between education and labour market needs. Rural residents, older adults and unemployed people faced the greatest barriers.

## Step 3. Define key areas of action

These findings revealed some key elements ZDC could introduce to improve digital inclusion, such as:

- A standardised approach to integrating digital literacy into school curricula;
- Targeted programmes for marginalised groups;
- New and improved continuous teacher training programmes;
- Targeted awareness campaigns to ensure awareness and participation in digital literacy programmes;
- Mobile digital literacy units for remote areas;
- An effective monitoring and evaluation framework.

"The guidelines based on the analysis of our territory's trainings and programmes are extremely useful for us, especially as we will find the gaps, and we will find new opportunities, new ideas for improving digital inclusion," says Salih.

Hurdles to overcome include poor internet infrastructure, low digital confidence (especially among older individuals and women), and limited awareness of existing programmes. Even when programmes exist, low participation and lack of inclusivity (such as for persons with disabilities) reduce their impact.

### Step 4. Refine regional plans, make digital education programmes more relevant and inclusive

The research allowed ZDC to refine its IAP, ensuring their actions respond directly to identified needs. It is also enabling stronger cooperation across the Canton to develop targeted digital literacy initiatives for students, teachers, SMEs, job-seekers, and marginalised communities.

## Learning and impact

For Salih, several findings were especially striking:

- A strong correlation between socioeconomic status and digital proficiency, with lower-income groups facing greater barriers;
- Demand for increased government investment digital inclusion initiatives, particularly in rural areas;
- The need to integrate digital literacy assessments into school curricula to systematically measure progress and identify areas for improvements.

"Salih adds, "Investing in digital inclusion is more than a skills programme. It is an investment in people's confidence, employability, and participation in modern society. In our region, we have seen how tailored trainings for marginalised, unemployed and employed people not only opens doors to jobs, but also empowers citizens to access services, connect with their communities, and adapt to the fast-changing digital world. We encourage other cities to start small, because the benefits multiply quickly."



## The next steps

Incorporating effective digital inclusion actions in the region's Development Strategy

> Digital literacy is crucial for digital inclusion. Infrastructure and access are not enough" says Salih.

ZDC will continue updating its current development strategy while preparing, from 2026, a more ambitious digital inclusion component for the next seven-year period. The Digi-inclusion IAP provides a strong foundation for this work.

The plan outlines 18 mid-term projects, from targeted training for marginalised groups (older people, disabled people, rural residents) to support for both employed and unemployed individuals seeking new skills. Community learning hubs will act as local centres for free training, complemented by online modules for remote learners, and tailored outreach campaigns.

> When preparing the 2020–2027 strategy, we lacked sufficient information on digital inclusion," says Salih. "This time, we will use our IAP to propose concrete, ready-prepared projects and small-scale actions."

"I think the most important benefit from this Digi-inclusion project will be to have strong actions to incorporate into our general regional development strategy. Because in that way, we will be more secure in successful implementation of all these actions."

# A broad survey of local inhabitants

## Gathering data on the reality and extent of digital exclusion locally



**City:** Mollet del Vallès (Spain) | **Population:** 52 283

**Delivered by:** Municipality of Mollet, working with Institut Opinometre and the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

## Dimensions strengthened

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

## Background and needs

Mollet del Vallès is a municipality in the Barcelona Province Metropolitan Area and also Lead Partner of the URBACT Digi-Inclusion network of cities. Located in a relatively prosperous part of Europe, the Municipality was surprised during the Covid-related lockdowns to learn how many households and families were struggling to take key activities - such as schooling - online.

Since then, the Municipality has sought to better understand and build its evidence base for addressing the phenomenon of digital exclusion locally. During the course of the Digi-Inclusion network it delivered multiple pilot activities for this purpose, including a broad public survey.

Before running the public survey, the Municipality carried out a review of the sociodemographic profile of the users of local e-administration services. By setting up an interdisciplinary group within the municipality, they identified digital exclusion by analysing available in-house data on use of e-services by citizens.

C1

This identified clear gaps in the use of e-services on the basis of age, nationality, education level, income level and place of residence. Gender, however, was found not to be an important factor.

This was then combined with the data from the city census, to create sociodemographic profiles of local people using the e-administration services, and crucially, highlighted that in fact many online transactions were carried out by proxies, and not directly online by citizens themselves.

These insights were starting to build a picture of local digital exclusion and common risk factors; but the Municipality wanted to go further.

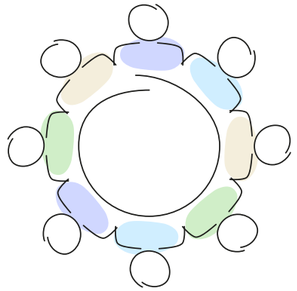
> “We decided to run a public survey so that we could generate more objective and qualitative data on the extent and reality of digital exclusion in Mollet. We knew that the problem is bigger than many people believed it to be, but we needed the evidence - especially for politicians,” explained project manager Albert Garcia, from the Municipality of Mollet.

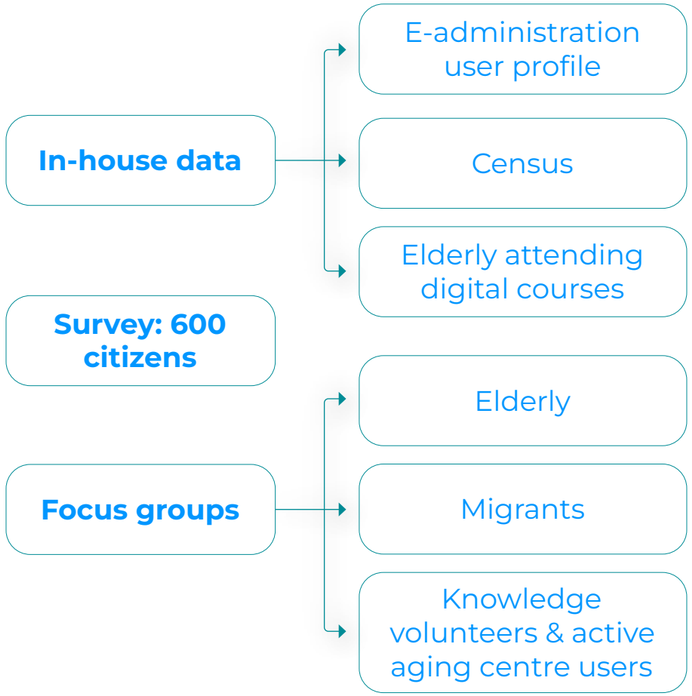
## Action taken

The municipality launched a public tender for a contractor to design, conduct and analyse a survey aiming to generate data from a broad and representative sample of the local population. The successful contractor was Institut Opinometre, a company specialised in market-research and public opinion, with offices in Barcelona.




The survey was conducted over the phone, with interviews lasting a maximum of 20 minutes. It targeted a representative sample of 600 local people aged 16 and over. It ensured that 200 respondents each were respectively from high, medium and low-income households, based on clearly defined criteria.




After initial questions to identify the respondent profile and accept or reject the interviewee, the survey was designed principally to cover: 1. Access, including (quality of) home connectivity and available devices; 2. Use, including frequency of access, digital skills self-assessment, digital autonomy and digital training; and 3. Perceptions, including areas of digital benefit, feelings of lost opportunities, and barriers to greater digital participation.

## Learning and impact

Analysis of the survey responses confirmed that there is a general level of digital connectivity in Mollet, but there are nuances and groups at risk of digital exclusion. Socioeconomic status clearly influences the relationship with the digital world and there are strong inequalities in the digital benefits achieved according to demographic group.

Age is an evident risk factor for digital exclusion with decreases in the frequency of use and benefits received with age - often with a sharp increase in exclusion risks over the age of 75. Other crucial risk factors for digital exclusion are the education level and the country of origin of people.

> “The survey confirmed to us that existing divides are creating defective digital inclusion, resulting in lost opportunities for certain sectors of the population. As Municipal institutions, we have a lot of work to do,” highlights Ferran Segarra; councillor responsible for Digitalisation.

## The next steps

The survey confirmed that common risk factors for digital exclusion - identified by research across Europe - are also relevant in the local context in Mollet. To follow up, working with the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Municipality went on to organise focus groups to explore in more detail the barriers, perceptions, and experiences of different population groups.




The focus groups aimed to dig deeper than the analysis of the in-house data and broad survey allowed, so as to better understand issues around motivation, confidence, (lost) opportunities, and self-perception related to digital inclusion in order to better target potential solutions and interventions.

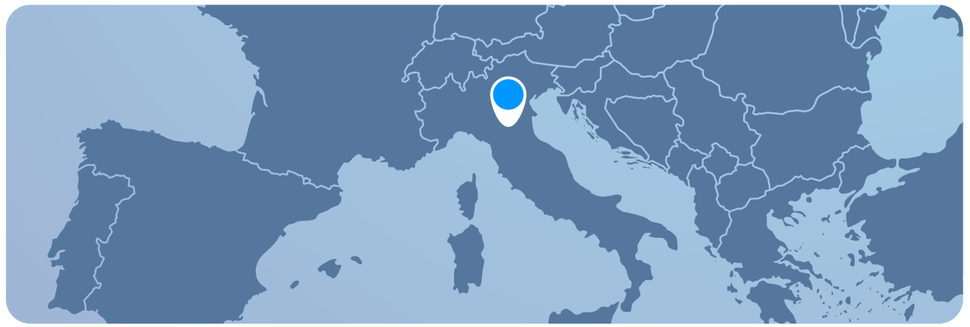
Three different groups were identified for group discussions: 1. People with no connection or limited access; 2. Active users but with difficulties; and 3. Advanced users. This latter group was included in particular to find out more about successful learning journeys.

Focus groups included 5-8 people and took part over 90 minutes in comfortable and accessible environments featuring a round or semicircular configuration to promote interaction. Each group discussion had two facilitators: one to guide the session and ensure equitable participation, supported by someone to take notes and summarise key concepts.

These additional insights were important to understand the local needs of people in greater details, as input into the design of actions and interventions to tackle local exclusions. The municipality also hope to repeat the broad survey in two years’ time to see if it highlights changes in the overall picture of digital inclusion in Mollet as a result of the actions implemented.

# A local digital inclusion manifesto

## Creating common purpose and principles amongst stakeholders



**City:** Bologna (Italy) | **Population:** 1 012 000 (in metropolitan city)

**Delivered by:** Lepida, a publicly-funded digital-support company (in-house) serving the Region, with municipalities and other public bodies across the Emilia-Romagna region

## Dimensions strengthened

B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners

D. Improving **interventions**

## Background and needs

For Lepida collaboration is the secret to tackling digital exclusion. The in-house company has spent years building up a broad network, including municipalities, volunteers, NGOs, schools and universities, suppliers, consumer associations, and other relevant actors across the region. Being part of Digi-Inclusion intensified this collaboration, sparking for example joint pilot actions, and research into existing digital support providers.

Short, simple agreements are one way to build on this momentum and help ensure commitment to working together on digital inclusion remains strong.

## Actions taken

### Agreements reinforcing collaboration with key local bodies

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Lepida has already signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with various bodies, reinforcing a shared vision on tackling digital exclusion. Schools are particularly valuable partners, with recent joint initiatives including digital training for migrant women in rural and mountainous areas, and digital skills workshops for elderly people to learn from students. Another scheme, motivating seniors to trust digital technology while limiting misinformation and other risks, was piloted in early 2025 and will be rolled out to target new groups of seniors and students through an EU project starting in October 2025.

The success of these MoUs lies in their simplicity. For example they may state broad agreements such as the key roles of each actor, with schools providing students and organisation, the senior centre providing the venue, and social services connecting senior residents with the scheme.

Lepida currently has such agreements with adult learning centres, and schools with a social care vocation. To scale up its digital inclusion work, Lepida now plans to sign similar shared visions with technical education institutes, benefiting more citizens across the region.

**What goes into an MoU?**

Here, Lepida shares some typical examples of practical commitments partners can agree to in an MoU supporting digital inclusion:

- Deliver joint training for volunteers and staff to support citizens with digital services.
- Provide and share clear information materials (leaflets, guides, online resources).
- Keep procedures updated and accessible online.
- Promote digital inclusion messages through social media and community channels.
- Maintain local digital help points for direct citizen support.
- Collaborate in wider initiatives to reduce the digital divide.

## Region-wide multi-stakeholder manifesto for Digital inclusion




To make region-wide cooperation more stable and last beyond the life-time of the Digi-Inclusion network, Lepida built a manifesto to include in its IAP as a final result. A short, simple agreement confirming a commitment from all digital inclusion supporters to continue to work together, ensuring that their resources and efforts are aligned. Members include regional and local authorities as well as URBACT Local Group members.

The manifesto is linked to further information: a ready-to-use catalogue of tried-and-tested education materials, and training programmes, facilitation techniques and communications tools.




**Example points in manifesto**

- Promote equal access to digital services
- Contribute actively to the implementation of the Bologna IAP
- Support enabling conditions
- Strengthen local ecosystems
- Share experiences and knowledge openly

A common goal: Continue facilitation activities locally by leveraging existing resources such as volunteers and community spaces.



## Learning and Impact

### Key messages: lessons on collaboration agreements

- Build on existing bilateral agreements to create a wider MoU
- Keep it simple
- Sign it with the right people – lasting bodies as well as elected officials
- Agree to open-ended, long-lasting cooperation
- Don't set too many specific rules on funding – that can come later
- Set out broad goals, a shared vision that everyone can get behind. For example: Maximise outreach with essential services for diverse target groups using available resources.

## The next steps

> "A key step is to build on an existing fertile ground of associations, schools, social centres and local authorities, recognising and valuing what is already there," says Teressa Gallelli. "Then, use a collaboration framework to bring partners together, uncover dispersed initiatives, and make them visible to each other – as we've been doing within Digi-Inclusion."

How to encourage the manifesto remains active? "Members are motivated to offer additional services to their usual users as part of their mission to build trust and provide support. Through the IAP actions, ULG members will be trained to strengthen their capacity to support their communities. This creates a virtuous "do ut des" dynamic: by investing in digital inclusion, they also gain stronger relationships with their users," says Teresa.

One surprising learning is that cooperation agreements do not need to be highly formal or complex to be effective. In Bologna, the strength lies in keeping them simple, linked to the existing missions of schools, associations and volunteering bodies. Rather than setting rigid goals, the focus is on creating trust, continuity and reciprocity.

# Pre-training needs assessments

## Finding out the needs of an existing group to test new interventions



**City:** Alexandroupolis (Greece) | **Population:** 73 000

**Delivered by:** Municipality of Alexandroupolis, working with the Thrace Technology Association and other local partners

### Dimensions strengthened

- C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**
- D. Improving **interventions**
- B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners

### Background and needs

On the advice of its URBACT Local Group members (ULG), the city of Alexandroupolis had identified older people as a key target group who could benefit from training in using digital services. They decided to run pilot training, testing out group classes for elderly people.

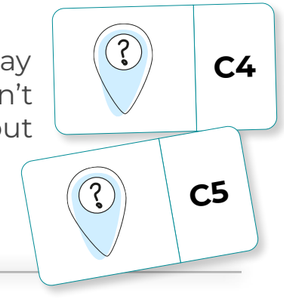
Following conditions set out by the ULG, the project team chose to work with one of the women's creative engagement groups that exist in communities around Alexandroupolis. These older women were interested in improving their IT skills, forming the perfect test group to run the pilot training.

### Actions taken

#### A need to better understanding local Digital Exclusion

The team had ideas for the training, however they decided to work with the group to understand their interests and needs for training. This needs assessment was one of the most critical stages in the design and implementation of this adult learning programme – a step towards ensuring it would be meaningful, targeted and effective. So, in order to identify the digital learning needs of participants, the organisers designed a survey for the women who would be taking part.

> "We brought the survey along to one of their Thursday morning meet-ups. But when they all told us they didn't have their glasses with them, we decided to read out the questions to them instead. It turned into a group discussion – and we got the answers we needed!" said Sara Tzanavarli, ULG Coordinator.



## Learning and impact

### Valuable insights into local digital exclusion

**Key survey data**

Among 46 members of the Alexandroupolis Women›s Creative Engagement Group (aged 58 to 86):

- 90% own a smartphone
- 90% use facebook
- 88% can take and share photos
- 4% use e-banking
- 4% can submit an application on gov.gr

Through the pre-training survey and the resulting discussion of about 30 minutes, the training provider learned that most of the 46 participants had a smartphone, used facebook and could take a photo and share it with someone.

The organisers were particularly surprised to find that about 90% of the women surveyed already had a facebook account. On the other hand, almost none of them used e-banking or were able to submit an application on gov.gr.

The survey also helped the organisers identify that a key concern for participants was digital security, including how to avoid being tracked, and how to identify and avoid phishing attempts, for example by responding to a fake message that appears to come from a bank. Participants confirmed that they wanted to learn more about cybersecurity.

### Impact of the survey

On the basis of the survey results, the digital trainer, from the Thrace Technology Association, worked with fellow ULG members to adapt the course content. Together, they made changes to put more focus on learning about simple actions, security, and building digital confidence.

> “It was such an important step in the process. It really helped us target the training to meet real needs rather than based on our initial assumptions.” Dimitra Chatzimagioglou, Project team member, Alexandroupolis



## Key lessons

- Take time to assess participants' digital experiences, needs and preferences systematically before designing training content and structure. This enables effective targeting of specific training, and motivates participants to engage.
- Using a survey or open discussion can work well with a small group to identify the needs of a particular pre-identified target group.
- When creating a questionnaire, remember that many older people have low vision and may not be able to read small text.
- Starting with a pre-existing group, in a venue they are familiar with, helps in testing new approaches.
- In designing and following up pre-training surveys, involve relevant stakeholders – from the local government, associations and IT and training organisations. Teamwork is key!

> "It's very important for us as a local authority to work openly with target groups, and build trust. Assessing people's needs to provide useful digital training is an important part of this," says Ioannis Zampoukis, Mayor of Alexandroupolis.

## The next steps

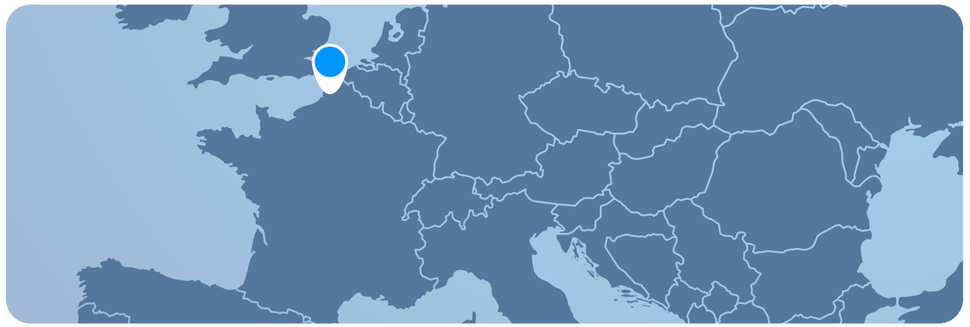
The Municipality of Alexandroupolis has applied to a national programme for the creation of a Digital Empowerment Hub for the Elderly in the former Bank of Greece building, where it will be co-located with the digital hub. The Thrace Technology Association and the Democritus University of Thrace (Department of Primary Education), both ULG members of the project, have committed to participate and support certain actions of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis' Action Plan, mainly in the field of literacy for socially vulnerable groups.

In collaboration with the Department of Primary Education, through mentoring and the connection of volunteer students with the elderly, digital empowerment classes are planned to continue operating in the coming years. In addition, a partnership is being launched with the 4th Model Vocational High School of Alexandroupolis to initiate a voluntary mentoring action from high school students towards senior citizens for the development of digital skills.

The goal is for this voluntary action to be integrated into the Digital Empowerment Hub in the former Bank of Greece building and to acquire long-term sustainability.

# Digital facilitators

## Having people on hand to support, guide and help develop autonomy



**City:** Boulogne-sur-Mer arrondissement (France)

**Population:** 157 976

**Delivered by:** Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale urban planning and economic development agency

### Dimensions strengthened

D. Improving **interventions**

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

### Background and needs

Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale covers the coastal city of Boulogne-sur-mer and its surrounding arrondissement. Overall this includes the CaB (Boulogne sur mer District Council) and dispersed rural and semi-rural communities in two surrounding municipalities: known as the CCDS (Desvres Samer District) and the CCT2C (Marquise District).

Among the multiple initiatives explored during an ongoing analysis of digital inclusion across the territory is a digital facilitation and training service closely aligned with citizens' needs.

### Actions taken

The service was set up in Saint-Martin, near Boulogne-sur-Mer, by Bellidée, an association that runs three community centres, two childcare centres, and diverse social activities, in close cooperation with residents and public authorities.

Bellidée saw many people coming in for help with online administrative tasks, such as dealing with unemployment benefits, health services, income tax, or car-sale declarations.

There are thousands of France Services digital support centres across the country, but most just help citizens with their administrative procedures onsite. Going a step further, Bellidée wanted to create a more sustainable model where people would gain the skills to go home and continue completing their digital tasks more independently.

To do so, in 2020 they set up a kiosk – called a '*Borne OuiPi*' – with a big screen and a user-friendly interface linking to commonly used websites. When people come in for help with an online task, the digital facilitator walks them through each step using the big screen, shows them how to complete the task on their own, and gives them a clearly printed leaflet which includes links to what they have seen on the OuiPi screen. When

they get back home, they can go online, find the simple interface they used at Bellidée to reach relevant services, then follow the clear steps in the leaflet to complete tasks themselves.

Three OuiPi kiosks are now available in Saint Martin.

> "The Ouipi administrative kiosk is a free access point for all residents. It gives you access to useful information and links for online admin tasks. And if you need help, a trained professional can be available to guide you," says Sébastien Famchon, responsible for digital inclusion at Bellidée.

Short video about the OuiPi kiosks

## Learning and impact

According to Sébastien Famchon, who is responsible for digital inclusion at Bellidée, and member of Boulogne-sur-Mer's URBACT Local Group, training the staff at the beginning of the initiative was a key challenge – and a vital step in providing a successful service. This was because, despite being authorised to collect and process personal data, some staff were themselves unfamiliar with digital tools, making it difficult for them to answer residents' requests for help.

### Ouipi statistics

Total connections at the three OuiPi kiosks Jan 2020-Aug 2025: 10 464

Websites most visited:

- CAF, family benefits agency – 746;
- Gmail – 523;
- Service-public.fr, government portal – 489;
- Ameli, public health platform – 484;
- Pôle Emploi, national employment agency – 213;
- Carsat, pension and health office – 130.

### Key lessons: keep up with people's changing needs

**Adapt the service to your inhabitants**. For example, over the years Bellidée identified a number of older adults and people with disabilities who were unable to come in to the centre. Realising this, they offered remote support by phone or videoconference – and a tailor-made service, going out to provide digital training for people in their own homes. Sébastien says: "These people are now able to order food at home via digital tools!"

## The next steps

**Keep on adapting to current needs**. The centre regularly runs surveys to find out what additional support would be useful – and then develops new services accordingly. A recent example is an interface to access the Marinéo transport network's local timetables online. They have also developed a workshop on how to use administrative websites. This continuous improvement is key to tailoring their offer to the local needs.



# Wifi for all

## Filling the “not-spots” in the municipality



**City:** Torres Vedras (Portugal) | **Population:** 83 072

**Delivered by:** City municipality

### Dimensions strengthened

- C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**
- D. Improving **interventions**
- A. Refining **objectives** and strategy
- B. Building an **ecosystem** of partners

### Background and needs

The municipality of Torres Vedras covers 13 coastal and rural parishes, with the urban city of Torres Vedras making up almost a third of its population. Recognising internet access for all citizens as vital for improving wellbeing in a digital world, Torres Vedras decided to assess all public wi-fi spots provided by the municipality across its territory.

### Actions taken

It also asked vulnerable groups about their use of, and need for, public wi-fi. With a clearer picture of the situation, the municipality could then plan tailored, realistic actions to improve digital inclusion.




“It’s important to know the real situation – What do we have already? What are the needs of the people? – to avoid launching any digital inclusion activities that don’t match the reality in our municipality,” says Sílvia Silva, Head of the Social Development Division at Torres Vedras City Council, and Digi-Inclusion Project Coordinator.




**Where do we provide public wi-fi?**

> “The first step is to see if everyone can access the internet, if everyone has the equipment they need, and if they can use it…” says Inês Vaz, Head of the Integrated Governance and Social Inclusion Unit at Torres Vedras City Council, and Digi-Inclusion URBACT Local Group Coordinator.

Various wi-fi points had sprung up in Torres Vedras over the years, including EU-funded Wifi4EU spots in city squares.

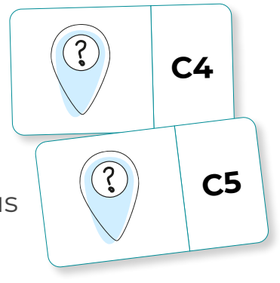
But could all citizens access free internet, even vulnerable residents in the most isolated, rural areas? In February 2025, two members of municipal staff set out to answer this question, with an intensive mission to explore exactly what public wi-fi access points the municipality provides across its territory. Over two months, they met with local leaders in all 13 parishes, discovering and assessing internet points in buildings ranging from public libraries and cultural spaces to museums and municipal offices.



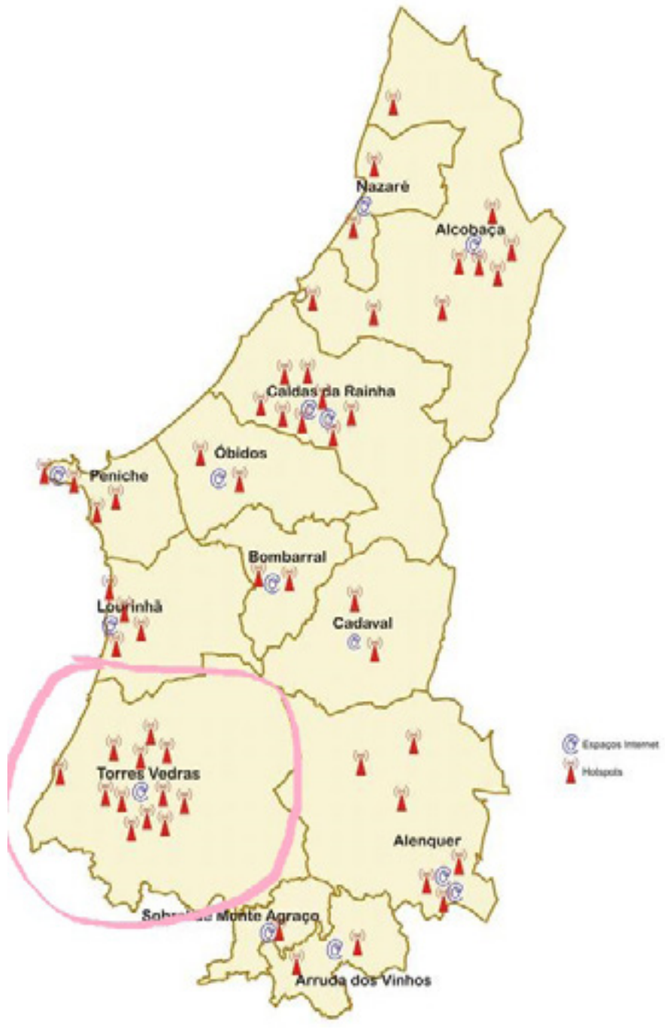

## Are we answering the digital needs of our target groups?

Torres Vedras also decided to investigate the wi-fi use and digital needs of its residents, focusing on two main target groups – older residents, and people with disabilities. Involving participants from all parishes, research included:

- Group discussions with more than 200 older people, working with 12 seniors' groups;
- Individual interviews with 18 people with visual impairments of varying ages;
- Further discussions including people with various disabilities, and staff who work with them.




Much of this research used the municipality's existing networks of citizens already identified as willing to answer surveys and give feedback on public services.



## Learning and impact

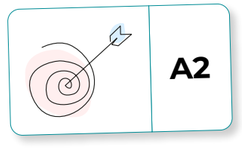
The overarching, positive conclusion – from questioning parish leaders and targeted groups – was that Torres Vedras already provides adequate internet access, with public wi-fi points in all but the smallest of the municipality's communities.

Above all, older adults and people with disabilities say what they really need is more human support, such as training and help in using digital technology. They are particularly interested in understanding how to use the internet on their phones, for example for certain apps, social media, and administrative tasks – including those on the municipality's own website.

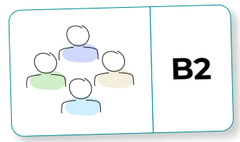
The only requests for materials such as computers and designated spaces were from parishes wanting to provide hands-on digital skills training and support to their residents.

> "Our diagnosis of public wi-fi showed that to have digital inclusion in all the parishes, it's not about internet access at all. It's about helping people with digital skills. It's about providing the right teachers and equipment for classes," says Inês.

This highlighted the importance of understanding the causes of the digital exclusions in a territory and strategically focussing on finding interventions that tackle those causes.




Torres Vedras learned the value of building on existing connections, and communicating directly with targeted groups of residents facing high risks of digital exclusion, as well as working closely with specialised NGOs. They say one improvement to their assessment of internet access would have been to include more local associations in their research, rather than focusing on municipal wi-fi spots alone.




## The next steps

With its new, clearer understanding of the adequacy of public internet access, the municipality is identifying new actions to tackle two key challenges:

- Supporting vulnerable groups with training and other services to improve their digital skills;
- Improving the user accessibility of the municipality's own website and other digital communications.

Additionally, they decided to run further focus groups and user testing to continue improving actions for digital inclusion.

### Message for other cities

> "The internet access study was really useful to know about the reality and the needs. It's no longer a vague idea, it's a reality. And that means we can set out a better, realistic action plan to improve conditions for digital inclusion." Sílvia Silva.

# Technology as a bridge

## Getting people started through training in basic digital skills

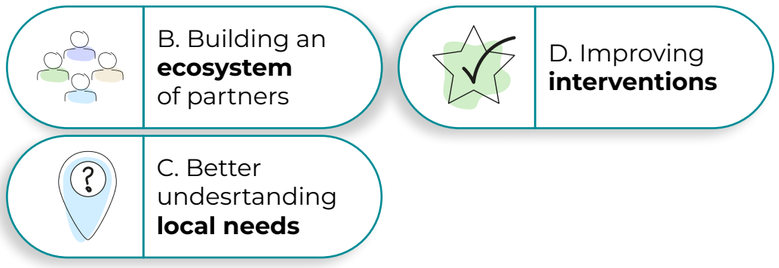


**City:** Iași (Romania)

**Population:** City population of 290 422; metro area over 420 000

**Delivered by:** Iași City Municipality's Directorate for Implementation of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy, working with the Iași Metropolitan Area's Intercommunity Development Association, and the Saint Parascheva Seniors Centre

### Dimensions strengthened




### Background and needs

For the city of Iași, the task of directly tackling digital exclusion is a new one. Responding to calls from their Social Assistance Directorate to help older adults and people with disabilities to use digital tools and services safely – to boost solidarity and inclusion, the city launched a class to provide basic skills in digital communications to people who were struggling to connect with friends and family online.

> "Many seniors feel lonely and isolated. We realised that we have to help them improve their skills to stay connected in the digital world," said Gabriel Stefan Chirilă, head of Directorate for Implementation of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy.

Coupled with that, the approach of bringing stakeholders into the process early is also less familiar and this was the first time Iași had gathered local organisations together to work on tackling digital exclusion.




### Actions taken

During Iași's URBACT Local Group discussions, the Metropolitan Intercommunity Association proposed to pilot a new digital training class in a community centre for seniors. The focus would be on connecting with family and friends.

Once permission was obtained from the mayor, the training was designed by ULG member Monica Manoliu from the Metropolitan Intercommunity Association, working with staff from the centre who knew the participants well. Preparations also involved ULG members from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, the oldest university in Romania, which offers a range

of programmes up to PhD level. The focus would be on connecting with family and friends.

In August 2024, the pilot class took place, at no extra cost. The trainer provided motivation, practical training – and support installing apps – with three main goals:

- Using smartphones;
- Communicating via apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger;
- Accessing social networks, online services and virtual support communities.

## Learning and impact

"This was a new way of working for our municipality. We had no experience with this kind of training, but we managed to run this successful pilot, with the help of our experienced colleagues from the Metropolitan Intercommunity Association," said Mihaela Popișa, local coordinator for Digi-Inclusion.

### Class facts and figures

- 25 seniors and people with disabilities took part
- Participants were aged 55 to 65, and most were women
- 3-hour class with a break
- Participants used their own mobile phones

Staff at the centre noticed the positive impacts for participants, who started connecting more with their families, through video and audio calls. Many said they were interested in further training to learn about other digital services.

### Key acheivements - poisitive feedback

- 100% of participants successfully made a video call.
- 80% reported feeling more confident using smartphones.
- 70% initiated video calls independently within a week.

"We saw digital literacy fostering empowerment and connectivity. Technology really is a bridge that can unite generations and combat loneliness!" said Monica Manoliu.



## Lessons learned

| What worked well | Improvements for the future |
|---|---|
| ■ Building valuable links with local organisations and experts<br>■ Hands-on learning, with guided, step-by-step instructions<br>■ A venue that participants already visit regularly<br>■ Working with an experienced teacher who the participants know and trust<br>■ Starting with a simple pilot class, to roll out across the metropolis | ■ Provide computers or tablets – with bigger screens, and voice commands. Eyesight and dexterity are big challenges.<br>■ Provide a simple printed guide that participants can refer to<br>■ Survey participants pre- and post-training to understand their needs and improve future classes<br>■ Give regular classes and ongoing support for long term benefits |

Overall, the pilot training showed the municipality the value of providing basic digital skills training for older adults and people with disabilities, working with experienced teachers who provide step-by-step guidance, repeat instructions clearly, and reassure participants who are afraid of making mistakes.

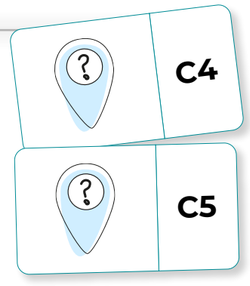
## The next steps

### A catalyst for improving digital inclusion across the metropolitan area

Learning from the experiences of this first pilot training, Iași plans to expand the scheme to benefit people in multiple community centres across the wider metropolitan area, working with the association that ran the first training, and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University. The proposal also includes more advanced training options, in using online banking or medical services for example. But this requires stable funding – requested in a digital inclusion action plan which will be submitted to the municipality for implementation in 2026. Partnerships with tech companies could provide further resources.

> “In our city, we recognise that providing digital training for older citizens is just as essential as investing in infrastructure. Both are necessary, as the well-being of our citizens must remain at the heart of development,” says Mihaela Popișa.

The pilot revealed a pressing need for more sociological research into seniors’ use of digital technology. This was carried out in a second pilot, in May and June 2025, working with the university, focusing on current uses, challenges and learning preferences.




It also sparked a new volunteer programme, with students from the university helping provide digital skills training to older people.

### A message for other cities

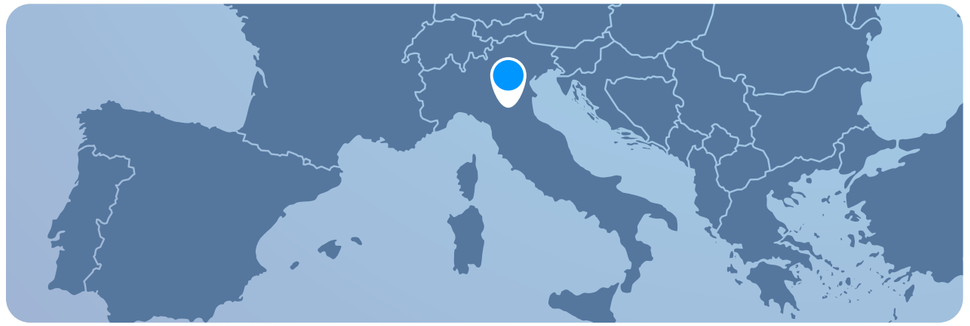
> “For this training, we created a sense of community – between us as a municipality, the Metropolitan Association, every centre... everyone involved. This was very important.




Our ULG members’ engagement was extraordinary. Before this project, I wouldn’t have believed that we could work together in this way. And I realised that this is what a community should do: support each other,” says Mihaela Popișa, local coordinator for Digi-Inclusion project.

# Intergenerational programmes

## Training schemes for school students to support seniors in digital skills



**City:** Bologna (Italy) | **Population:** 1 012 000 (in metropolitan city)

**Delivered by:** Lepida, a publicly-funded digital-support company (in-house) serving the Region, municipalities and other public bodies across the Emilia-Romagna region

## Dimensions strengthened

D. Improving **interventions**

## Background and needs

This intergenerational project is a heart-warming initiative where high-school students share their digital skills with older people, in workshops beneficial to all. Involving the Crescenzi-Pacinotti-Sirani school in Bologna, and Centro Antartide, an organisation promoting social innovation, this example highlights the value of strong local cooperation, volunteer work – and a 'decentralised' approach with activities taking place in easy-to-access locations already familiar to participants.

## Actions taken

### Older people learning to navigate the digital world...

The scheme has two main groups of activities: Through two 2-hour modules, students were trained on topics such as digital barriers and support methods, essential digital services, and role-playing exercises to prepare them for field activities. This was followed by digital practice groups consisting of four 2-hour sessions, involving 25 older participants, in collaboration with the Casa di Quartiere Due Agosto 1980.

### ... Helping their young trainers learn valuable lessons along the way

The initiative was a valuable educational experience for the young volunteers, who said they learnt lessons such as:

- Speak slowly and explain concepts multiple times,
- And engage participants directly to enhance practical learning.

A peer-to-peer session was introduced, allowing newly trained student facilitators to engage with those from the previous edition. This exchange supported learning while strengthening students' motivation and ownership of the project. From an organisational perspective, the experience also confirmed the importance of predictable scheduling and

continuity—such as holding sessions every other Tuesday morning—which proved essential in fostering sustained participation and engagement among older adults.

## Learning and impact

### Positive participants feedback: “I found it very useful!”

Overall, participants found the programme positive, useful and entertaining, highlighting the students’ helpfulness, availability and diligence.

> “I would recommend this course because students are excited, prepared and attentive to the needs of our age group.”

Participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions and collaborate on defining objectives and strategies for achieving them. The experience encouraged a shift from a traditional teaching-learning dynamic to a more collaborative and intergenerational approach.

> “I solved some doubts I had, I also found fun exchanges with students.”



### Schools are central to intergenerational digital inclusion support

These intergenerational workshops demonstrate the power of working with young volunteers and older adults to strengthen digital inclusion, students’ interpersonal skills, and community connections.

> “The real value,” says Teresa Gallelli, “lies in the school’s willingness to participate and to experiment with the different approaches we propose. A clear example was when the school hosted the entire Digi-Inclusion Network during the transnational network meeting in Bologna, organising a mini-event with the active involvement of students, several teachers, and the headmistress. In addition, some seniors also shared their experiences during the meeting, in an event held at the City Hall of Bologna, providing a powerful intergenerational perspective.”

Watch the video

# A targeted survey on the Catalan health system app

## Learning more about the reasons why people do or do not use the e-services available.



**City:** Mollet del Vallès (Spain) | **Population:** 52,283

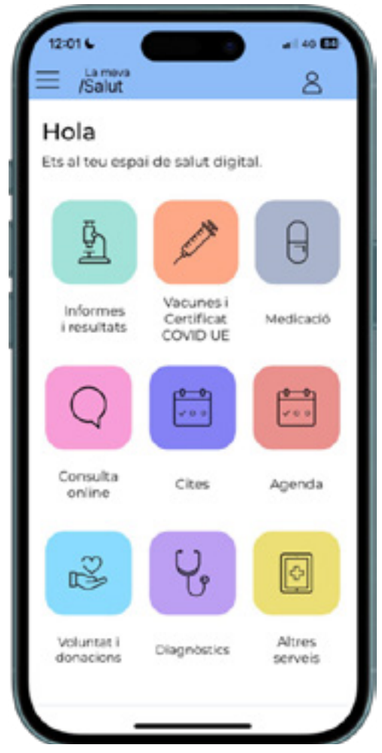
**Delivered by:** Plana Lledó Primary Healthcare centre, Mollet del Vallès

## Dimensions strengthened

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

## Background and needs

'La Meva Salut' is a digital health portal and mobile app offered by the public healthcare system of Catalonia (CatSalut) to provide a unique digital interface with the public health system. It lets people access their health information and interact remotely with the health-care system through a password protected digital system.




Once registered (online or in person), users can: view and download clinical reports and test results; review active medication plans; book or manage appointments; benefit from remote consultations or administrative procedures; check immunisation and vaccination history; and see waiting lists for surgeries.

Being a Catalan municipality, residents of Mollet are able to take advantage of the health system app. However, as part of the Digi-Inclusion project, the municipality was increasingly conscious of the number of people not taking advantage of the digital services provided.

Whilst the regional government continues to seek positive ways to improve services through digitalisation, the professionals from the Primary Healthcare centre wanted to understand better who uses the app (and what for), and who does not (and why).

## Actions taken

Plana Lledó Primary Healthcare centre decided to run a survey targeted at patients as the main potential beneficiaries of the app. Paper copies of a short user survey were created in Catalan, Spanish, English, French and Arabic. At the same time, a digital multi-lingual version of the survey was set up.

Questions covered user profiles, including age, gender, place of birth and education level as well as general questions about digital connectivity and knowledge of the app. Further questions explored specific use of the app and the main barriers and reasons for use or lack of use.

Paper copies of the survey were made available in the centre as a pilot location alongside a QR code put up in multiple locations in the centre, including the desks of healthcare providers to encourage user participation.

## Learning and impact

The results confirmed that the key risk factors for lack of use of the app were old age and lower levels of of education. However, gender and place of birth did not seem to be relevant predictors of exclusion.

Whilst it had been expected that password issues were a main barrier to use, the findings showed the main causes were in fact a relative lack of knowledge of the app (38%), a lack of understanding of how to use it (32%) and finding it too difficult (16%).

> “We also learned practical lessons from the pilot including that we must be proactive in seeking answers and that most people have problems filling in digital forms and prefer paper,” explains Carme Saperas, General Practitioner at Institut Català de la Salut.

## The next steps

The ultimate aim is to support users to obtain the maximum possible value and convenience from the app, which could be particularly beneficial for vulnerable users who cannot always easily physically access care locations. These survey results highlight the importance of understanding the true barriers and needs faced by people when designing and implementing digital apps and systems.

The survey confirmed that 60% of respondents would welcome training in use of the app, so the immediate follow-up to the survey was to design a tailor-made training aiming to increase awareness of and ability to use the app.

# Digital on the move!

## Using a mobile classroom approach to reach rural communities



**City:** Jelgava Local Municipality (Latvia) | **Population:** 33 348

**Delivered by:** Local Municipality (rural municipality surrounding a central, industrial city)

### Dimensions strengthened

D. Improving **interventions**

### Background and needs

In line with their motto “Digital + Social = Equality”, Jelgava Local Municipality was looking for ways to boost local digital skills, particularly among the elderly, people with disabilities, and job-seekers. In a municipality 70 km wide, with 40 villages around a central city, residents face challenges such difficulty accessing services – and resistance to change.

Jeļena Žoide, head of the municipality’s Lifelong Learning Unit, saw just how convenient it would be for certain adults to attend training as close as possible to their home.

### Actions taken

The municipality decided to test out a mobile digital classroom to improve digital skills and social inclusion of vulnerable communities. The project was implemented in April to May 2025, providing a combination of equipment and training, delivered to a local setting.

In terms of equipment, teachers use a sort of portable education kit in a big high-tech suitcase. They can easily wheel this out to diverse venues to give practical informal digital training across the territory.

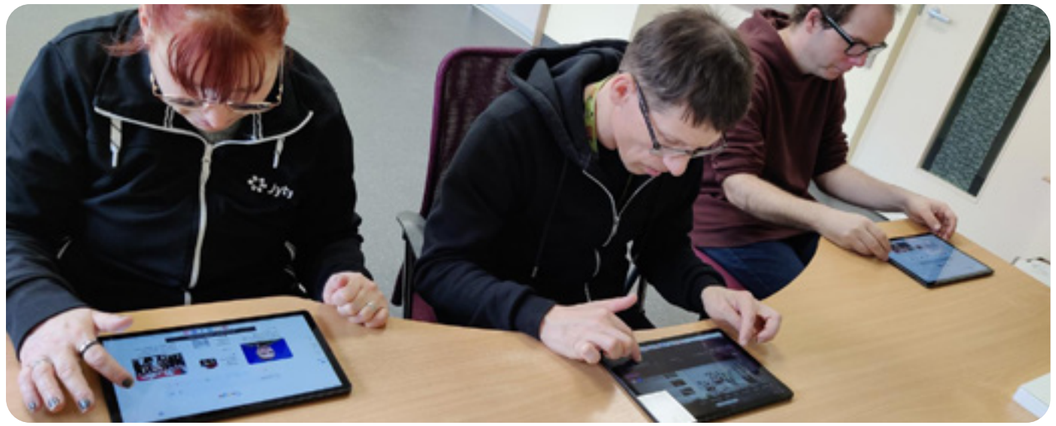
Inside the case are 16 tablets, which can be charged simultaneously. Tablets are similar in design to participants’ smartphones, helping them learn new information to use in everyday life. Internet access can be provided by a router if wi-fi is not available onsite. All that was needed was a suitable, accessible room with tables and chairs in each location. A big screen for slides is helpful, but not completely necessary as they can be viewed on each tablet.

Jelgava Local Municipality piloted the scheme in three places – the Multi-functional Social Care Centre “LAIPA”, Activity Centre “Zemgale” and Lielvircava Culture House. They provided two courses for adults aged 50

to over 70, and one for people with intellectual disabilities. Group sizes ranged from 3 to 11 participants, for the non-formal education programme, titled “Digital Skills for Various Everyday Situations”

Topics were defined by the municipality together with relevant departments, teachers, and partner organisations. Three sessions focused on:

- How to get into the digital world (using a tablet, doing an internet search scanning a QR code...);
- How digital skills can make your life easier (government services, google maps, finding new ideas and like-minded people...);
- Using Internet banking (common procedures, safety, fraud awareness).



## Learning and impact

### Keys to success for the mobile digital classroom?

- **Find a good, dynamic teacher**
  Ilze Brakmane, Head of the Education support unit, within Jelgava Local Municipality’s Education Board, says: “One of the most important elements is to find the right group teacher. They must be knowledgeable on both the technologies and the topics offered – and have the experience, ability and empathy to adapt the curriculum to the abilities of the residents.”
- **Adapt the programme, topics and timing**
  Ilze continues “In creating this programme we tried to include topics relevant to all participants in everyday use – online banking, booking a doctor’s appointment, using Google maps...”
- **Show participants real practical benefits**
  Teacher Rebeka Grīnfelde says that for older participants to stick with the programme and learn new digital skills, they need to see that the class will answer their questions, keep them safe online, and help them avoid scams. “You’re over 70, you want to know how to pay your bills online, that’s your goal – you don’t want much more information!”
- **Foster collaboration with local centres**
  For the room, invitations and follow-up with the course participants, and other organisation support.

As a result of Jelgava Local Municipality’s pilot project, all participants confirmed that they prefer learning in the mobile classroom rather than in a learning centre. Participants acquired basic skills and felt encouraged to use digital services to solve everyday situations.

Jautrīte Kārkliņa, senior participant, said she attended the classes to gain knowledge and independence: “I know a thing or two but I don’t like working with computers. Now I want to overcome that fear, that reluctance, so I can do something for myself and not have to ask my daughter for help, in case I press the wrong button.”

**Survey results from the class for older adults**

“I enjoyed learning in the mobile classroom better than in the learning centre” – 100%

“My digital skills have improved”: A little – 38%; Average – 57%; Very – 5%

“Most useful/interesting topics I learned/mastered”:

- Internet security and personal data protection,
- Use of e-signature,
- E-services (e-health),
- Obtaining information on the Internet

Jelgava Local Municipality took some key lessons from the pilot:

- It would be desirable to establish criteria for group composition so that the group is more homogeneous in terms of knowledge level and interests.
- In terms of group size, consider that must be tailored: for example, group work is much less suitable for people with mental disorders; for senior groups with low levels of knowledge and skills, group size needs to be smaller, to allow more individualised support.
- Lessons should also typically be shorter in time and greater in number.
- One of the decisive factors in conducting classes for people at risk of social exclusion is the class leader – their professional skills and pedagogical mastery, flexibly adapting the content and form of the classes to the specific needs of the group members.

## Message to other cities...

Gatis Kasparinskis, the local project coordinator for Digi-inclusion, says:

> “When planning non-formal training, look outside the box, find a teacher who lights up the room, and bring the digital classroom right to people’s doorsteps. When seniors and vulnerable groups suddenly smile and say ‘I can do it myself now’, that’s the real magic – and it’s absolute.

And the benefits are wide-ranging, says Rebeka Grīnfelde “Many of these seniors were a little lonely. If they come together, it inspires them to learn, to move, to make progress, and that’s good for the whole rural community.”

## The next steps

The mobile digital suitcase is already in high demand across the municipality for a broad range of initiatives, from training teachers in AI to encouraging disadvantaged young people to learn digital literacy in using sensory therapy.

And, building on the successes and learnings of its pilot scheme for vulnerable groups, Jelgava Local Municipality will include mobile classrooms in its new local action plan for digital inclusion to keep on developing and providing training activities in the future.

# Digital and disabilities

## Listening to people with disabilities



**City:** Torres Vedras (Portugal) | **Population:** 83 072

**Delivered by:** City municipality

### Dimensions strengthened

C. Better undesrtanding **local needs**

D. Improving **interventions**

### Background and needs

With Portugal's first ever municipal 'Office for Visual Disability Support', set up in 2013, Torres Vedras is well placed to focus on improving digital inclusion for residents with disabilities.

A new URBACT Local Group created by the municipality for the URBACT Digi-Inclusion network has also strengthened links with relevant NGOs. This is helping Torres Vedras put people with disabilities at the heart of digital inclusion actions across its 15 urban, rural and coastal parishes.

#### Strengthening an active network of people with impaired vision

People who are blind or have low vision make up one of the main groups that Torres Vedras has decided to target in its drive to assess and improve digital inclusion.

A key partner is the municipality's well-established office for visual disability support, which runs activities ranging from practical classes to theatre and music therapy for citizens around the territory, providing transport to and from their homes.

As a result, Torres Vedras has strong connections with a diverse group of residents with visual disabilities, whose ages range from 5 to 88. Recognising the benefits for all involved, the municipality invited members of this network to participate in digital inclusion efforts. These include focus groups and individual interviews to assess digital challenges and opportunities, and plan new actions such as classes on digital questions, and improvements to digital services.

> “When we started looking at digital inclusion with our colleagues in the office supporting people with visual impairments, we discovered they had so many needs. So we chose to work more closely with them to understand the challenges, and develop new activities,” says Sílvia Silva, Head of the Social Development Division at Torres Vedras City Council, and Digi-Inclusion Project Coordinator.

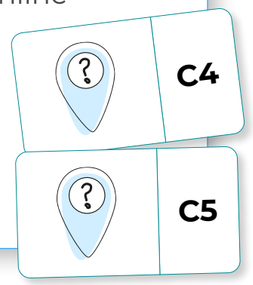


## Actions taken

Torres Vedras invited 18 people with various levels of visual impairments to a focus group investigating computer and mobile phone use, and needs for digital support and training. This showed:

- 55% were unable to access information on the municipality website
- 60% were unable to access social security information online
- 70% were unable to access health-related services

A further pilot action involving multiple individual interviews identified specific difficulties in accessing information from the municipality, including certain web pages and official emails.




> “People complain a lot about public online services being very inaccessible. We can’t change things at national level, but we can make our local municipal website better, easier to access,” says Sílvia.

Thanks to an active member of the visual impairment support office, and exchanges at digital skills workshops, the digital inclusion team is collecting tips for improving local online services. These will feed into the municipality’s new website, currently under construction.

They include feedback on access – whether the website can be used at all by people with disabilities – and usability – how easy and efficient it is to use the site. User suggested improvements include:

- Ensure all essential information appears as text rather than images alone.
- Remove pop-ups.
- Simplify navigation, reducing steps to reach common useful pages, such as the latest agenda of local events.
- Use clear headings and labels.

### Focus on disability at every stage

- More broadly, Torres Vedras is also working with relevant staff and an organisation supporting people with cognitive and motor impairments – a member of the newly formed URBACT Local Group. Together, they are considering disability as a key factor in their work on improving digital inclusion for all, feeding learnings into a range of newly proposed actions for digital inclusion in 2026.

"It's a new experience, as we do a lot of social inclusion work, and we were far from seeing digital inclusion as a need, or a topic. It's been a good surprise to discover how focusing on digital inclusion can be an important part of supporting social inclusion," says Inês Vaz, Head of the Integrated Governance and Social Inclusion Unit at Torres Vedras City Council and Digi-Inclusion ULG Coordinator.

## The next steps

Further focus groups are planned to test and assess the municipality's online services, feeding into the ongoing development of the new website. The Social Development Division will continue to work closely with the communication department to ensure the new website is as accessible and user-friendly as possible.

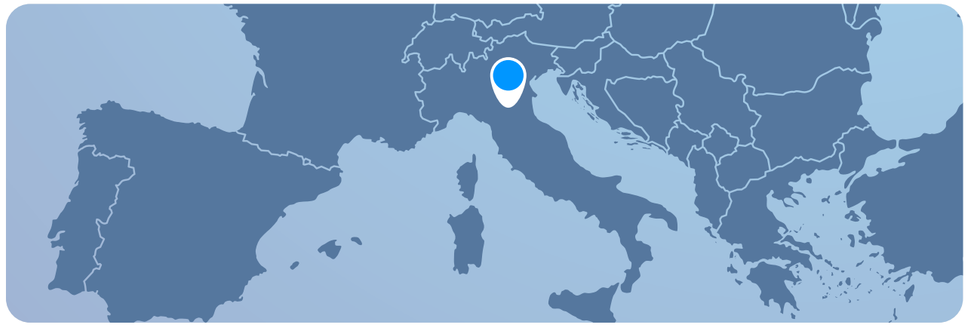
### Message for other cities

"Listen to the people who live with these difficulties, and – the most important thing – work not just for them, but with them, throughout the whole process," says Inês.



# Building trust and motivation

## Using alternative starting points to engage people in the digital world



**City:** Bologna (Italy) | **Population:** 1 012 000 (in metropolitan city)

**Delivered by:** Lepida, a publicly-funded digital-support company (in-house) serving the Region, municipalities and other public bodies across the Emilia-Romagna region

### Dimensions strengthened

D. Improving **interventions**

### Background and needs

This interesting digital inclusion example from Lepida shows the value of working with older people to build trust and motivation first, by tapping into concerns or motivations, not just starting with digital skills training. This approach addresses the gap in interventions which focus on the individual side causes of digital exclusion, of individuals lacking Motivation to use what the system, and lacking Confidence in the system being safe.

It bridges the generational digital divide, empowering older adults to protect themselves and others from scams, misinformation, and social exclusion. We could say this is about tackling 'self-exclusion', by motivating seniors to use digital services, avoid misinformation, and stay safe. And this is just the beginning: this successful approach will now be expanded to benefit others across the region.

### Actions taken

Lepida ran this pilot training scheme in early 2025 as part of a synergy developed with the EU-funded SUM project, which addresses key aspects such as user motivation and trust. AUSER, an association for active ageing – and URBACT Local Group member – played a key role, providing trusted spaces, and mobilising its network of older adults.

**An internet safety course co-created with older people**

> "This training initiative was about empowering older adults, not just as learners but as peer educators, fostering autonomy and trust," says Teresa Gallelli.

The first step was to co-design the training with the participants, increasing ownership and relevance. Content was updated regularly with latest examples of digital misinformation, ranging from scams and AI fakes to suspect WhatsApp messages.

The resulting programme consisted of three formal training sessions and a peer-to-peer workshop. These were supported by visuals, printed materials such as tips for fake news recognition, and contact details of public services. In terms of logistics: movable chairs and open layouts were favoured to promote dialogue; projectors, good acoustics and readable fonts supported clarity and accessibility – particularly for participants with impaired vision.

One key element was the 'training of trainers'. Selected older participants were trained to lead workshops themselves, independently. These peer trainers were awarded with certificates, reinforcing their legitimacy and motivation to continue.



## Learning and impact

### Key results

- 10 peer trainers emerged and went on to lead workshops themselves.
- Awareness and preparedness against scams and misinformation measurably increased.
- Feedback from questionnaires showed strong satisfaction with the practical, accessible content and the respectful learning environment.

### Key lessons

- Older adults are highly capable of leading and teaching when methods are participatory.
- Peer-to-peer models foster trust and engagement.
- Regularly updated content is essential to address evolving misinformation, especially AI-based.
- Accessibility (visuals, acoustics, fonts) is critical for inclusive learning.
- Certificates and recognition help sustain motivation and peer leadership.

## The next steps

Bologna now has a replicable toolkit and training model that can be scaled to other communities.

Thanks to new funding, from Erasmus+ and elsewhere, the scheme will now be rolled out to provide similar digital safety courses across Bologna, broadening it to reach young people, working with schools and social centres.

# Digi-inclusion

## The Playbook

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg