digitol

Country Report

WP 2 - Context Analysis

Znanie Association

Table of Contents

Technical References

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Project Coordinator	Antonio Dell'Atti, antonio.dellatti@comunitabrianza.it, Consorzio Comunita Brianza
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PU = Public

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4

Executive Summary

The digitalisation is taking over in that many spheres in our lifes that most of us do not question it anymore. We adapt, or at least are trying to, to the new technologies in everyday life and quicly forget the times when they weren't there for us. By the time we take for granted that we can pay our bills electronically, use our online bank application or order some food by clicking twice at the touch screen. Having all the access to the technological gadgets and 24/7 internet access, in the resent years we even started measuring also the negative aspects coming along.

Being not online becomes a bigger and serious burden of not being able to function fully in the modern world. At the same time the surveys show that even in United Europe the level of accessibility and digital skills are so different that it is sometimes hard to imagine how big is the gap between the most and the least advanced.

Having conducted the DIGITOL project survey phase and examining existing information we have found a huge room for improvement in order to provide adequate and timely training opportunities for older people to upskill them with digital competences and media literacy. It is not only that Bulgarians are at the bottom on every chart. It is also difficult to find barely any information or initiative about people from the age group 55+, and especially 65+.

We tend to perceive our finding as challenge and opportunity rather than as an issue.

1. DIGITOL and the relevance of digital literacy - an introduction

In the context of Covid-19, the importance of digital competences and digital literacy has again come into the limelight. As people stayed home, they faced challenges in terms of keeping up with work through online communication tools. But they also faced the challenge to stay healthy and informed when receiving and evaluating information about the pandemic that was being conveyed through both online and offline media channels. It quickly became apparent that disinformation and so called "fake news" at times spread faster through the internet than official, reliable and trustworthy information. Thus Covid-19 became a prime example for the spread of fake news and the effects this can have on society.

Beyond the issue of fake news, the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted to what extent our digitised environments increasingly rely on the Internet to inform, communicate, shop, but also to access services such as banking, tele-health services, governmental and administrative services, etc. Yet, despite the fact that older Europeans (55+) growingly use the Internet, their presence online remains low in comparison to other age groups.

Although efforts to support the digital inclusion of older adults should not rest in intensity, we believe the challenges of today's Internet and the rapid development of fake news in the last decade require a renewal of how to approach digital literacy.

Developing digital literacy skills should expand beyond the acquisition of basic capacities in operating computers, tablets, and other smart devices into developing media literacy, critical thinking, and a proficiency to identify reliable online information.

The latter necessity gains prominence since fake news tend to hamper the public debate on topics of immense political importance, such as: climate change, displaced populations, social inclusion, fight against poverty, tolerance to diversity, and many more.

In this context, DIGITOL delivers a contribution to promoting EU common values, such as solidarity and diversity.

This is achieved by developing and delivering an innovative digital literacy training with younger trainers and older learners. The project aims to make the Internet accessible and more respectful for all. Thus, DIGITOL will contribute to combating discrimination within the EU that are driven by xenophobia, populism, and homophobia by gathering younger and older people around the challenge to identify and contain fake news and online hate speech.

This report is the result of the first phase of the project and provides and analysis of the local, national and European context regarding digital literacy among older adults with a view to informing and guiding the further implementation of the project. As such it will present the results of a desk research on the state of the art of digital literacy in the project countries, namely: Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and Italy. It will also present the information, ideas and suggestions on all aspects relevant for the implementation of the project that were gathered through the direct engagement of stakeholders. This information was collected by means of an online survey, interviews among experts and direct discussions with groups of stakeholders through the method of the focus group.

In this first chapter, the objectives and the questions that have been guiding our analysis will be introduced. This will be followed by a section discussing the definition of key concepts regarding digital literacy and disinformation as they will be used throughout the report.

Consequently, a brief description of the methodology for data collection will be provided, outlining the methods and tools that form the basis for both collection and analysis of the data that will be presented in Chapter 3, 4 and 5.

In Chapter 3, the main results from the desk research will be outlined, focusing on information regarding the digital literacy landscape of the project countries with a focus on the situation concerning digital literacy among older adults.

In Chapter 4, the information gathered through the engagement of stakeholders will be presented and analysed, while Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the main findings that are relevant for the design and implementation of the Training-of-Trainers and the capacity building programme, and a general outlook on the relevance of the data for the project and beyond.

1.1. Objectives and questions guiding our analysis

The research was guided by and intends to provide an answer to two main research questions.

The first is targeting the general situation and the opinion of both experts and older adults on the use of the internet and social media mong older adults. It could be phrased in the following way:

> Research Question 1: To what extent are older adults using the internet and social media and what would be there training needs concerning aspects such as digital literacy, digital competences, and fake news.

The second aims to identify the existing best practices for adult education and the teaching of media literacy and digital competences with a view to employing the most relevant during the implementation of the capacity building programme. It could be phrased in the following way:

> Research Question 2: What are some of the best practice examples for training initiatives and formats for teaching media literacy and digital competences and to what extent can they inform the design of the DIGITAL SOCIAL ACADEMY?

As a first step to approach these questions, it is important to briefly introduce the main concepts that form part of this analysis, i.e. digital literacy, media literacy, fake news and disinformation. These will be briefly discussed in the following. Consequently, the methodology used for gathering the data will be described before laying out an analysis of the main results.

1.2. Key concepts

DIGITOL provides an intergenerational approach to teaching digital literacy and media literacy in order to combat 'fake news'. Especially 'fake news' is contested as a term so what is meant when referring to these concepts?

In order to provide clarity on these key concepts, the following will provide an outline and brief discussion of some of these key terms.

In recent times, 'fake news' has come to prominence in public debate and its effects on society and democracy have gained more and more attention. In the report of the independent High level Group on fake news and online disinformation (HLEG) (DG Connect, 2018: 10), the term 'fake news' is described as referring to a 'spectrum of information types'. This includes so called 'low-risk forms' such as partisan political discourse and click bait headlines. However, it also includes more high risk

practices such as the use of malicious fabrications using automated amplification techniques that are used by different actors for example to infiltrate grass roots groups or to influence and undermine democratic processes in EU countries (DG Connect, 2018: 10).

However, according to the High Level Expert Group (HLEG), the term is inadequate because it does not capture the complexity of disinformation and related practices such as fabricated or manipulated videos, organized trolling, targeted advertising and the like. At the same time 'fake news' is a misleading term, as it is at times being used by some politicians in order to dismiss coverage they do not agree with. For these reasons the high level group avoids the use of the term 'fake news' and instead suggest that the issue at stake is better described with the term disinformation (DG Connect, 2018: 10).

Hence, disinformation is being defined as 'all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted intentionally to cause public harm or for profit' (DG Connect, 2018: 10).

While it can be harmful, it is to be distinguished from other forms of illegal forms of speech, such as defamation or hate speech which falls under the regulatory remedies of EU or national laws (DG Connect, 2018: 11).

For the purpose of this report and also for the purpose of the project at large, the definition of disinformation will be adopted as the main operating concept. However, due to the popular use and prominence of the term 'fake news' among the project partner's local stakeholders, the term 'fake news' will continue to be used interchangeably with disinformation, keeping in mind that the definition of disinformation and the concept of 'fake news' for our purpose will refer to the definition as suggested by the HLEG, and as described also in the European Commission communication on tackling on-line disinformation (European Commission 2018: 3-4) meaning 'verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm'.

According to the communication on tackling on-line disinformation (European Commission 2018: 1), such disinformation has the potential 'to erode trust in institutions and in digital and traditional media. It can furthermore harm democracies by hampering the ability of citizens to take informed decisions while supporting both radical and extremist ideas and activities (European Commission, 2018: 1). As such it may have severe effects on society, including threats to democratic political and policy-making

processes and may even put at risk 'the protection of EU citizens' health, the environment or security' (European Commission, 2018: 2).

Thus tackling disinformation and the spread of fake news is one of the main objectives of DIGITOL. In order to do so, DIGITOL promotes the teaching of Media Literacy and Digital Literacy. However, what is meant with those terms and how do they relate to tackling misinformation?

Again here, we rely on the definitions as provided by the European Commission.

According to the European Commission policy on Media Literacy: (Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, 2019), Media Literacy is understood to be the 'capacity to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with the media' and 'enables citizens of all ages to navigate the modern news environment and take informed decisions'. Similarly, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2018: (59)) states, that Media Literacy refers to the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for consumers to use the media effectively and safely.

Following the European Commission definition of Media Literacy (Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, 2019), it is important to note, that Media literacy concerns different media such as broadcasting, the radio and the press. It also includes different distribution channels that are operated through traditional media outlets, the interne as well as social media. Finally, Media literacy is also understood to be a 'tool empowering citizens as well as raising their awareness and helping counter the effects of disinformation campaigns and fake news spreading through digital media' (EU Commission policy on Media Literacy (Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, 2019).

When Media Literacy is mentioned in the context of the internet and social media, it may at times coincide with the term Digital Literacy. According to Law et al. (2018: 6), digital literacy includes competences that may be referred to variously as media literacy, information literacy, computer literacy, and the like. In this context 'Digital literacy is understood as 'the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship' (Law et al. 2018: 6).

Thus, media literacy and digital literacy are interrelated as they overlap with regards to the skills that refer to the technical use of information technology. In a way these technical skills can be regarded as key competence to access but also to interact with information that is available on various formats online such as social media or news websites, through the use of desktop computers, tablets and the like.

The overlap of media literacy and digital literacy is comprehensively portrayed in the European Digital Competence Framework (Kluzer, S., Pujol Priego, L.: 2018: 16). This framework sets out five broad areas of competence for European citizens. Already the first area refers to information and data literacy. This includes 'browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content'. It also includes the skills to 'analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content' as well as the skills to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate the data, information and digital content' (Kluzer S., Pujol Priego L.: 2018: 12).

This highlights the importance of information and media literacy when talking about the use of information technology and digital competences at large.

According to the authors (Kluzer S., Pujol Priego L.: 2018: 12) the Digital Competence Framework describes those competences that are crucial today 'when using digital technologies in a confident, critical, collaborative and creative way to achieve goals related to work, learning, leisure, inclusion and participation in our digital society'.

In this sense, the digital competence framework provides a comprehensive reference point that includes both media literacy and digital literacy under the same umbrella, highlighting the interdependence of technical skills for the use of information technology and the more intangible skill for critical understanding of and interaction with the digital information environment.

Thus it becomes clear, that both digital literacy and media literacy are key in combatting the spread of disinformation and fake news. However, this also means that tackling the disinformation challenge is not only a matter of improving technical skills for the use of new technological equipment. Even more so, it is a matter of improving the media literacy of citizens of all age groups so that they can become able to navigate the news environment safely in order to make informed decisions. In this sense it is media literacy, with all its facets, that can be regarded as the main important competence that there is to be fostered when it comes to the combatting of all forms of disinformation.

Having clarified and discussed some of the key concepts that are being used throughout this report, the following section will briefly lay out the methodology of data collection before going ahead with the analysis of the research results and the conclusion on the recommendations for the design and the implementation of the capacity building programme.

2. Details on Data Collection

In order to ensure the truthfulness and quality of the information provided for the country report, Znanie team conducted a research in accordance with the general recommendations of Pro Arbeit as a leading partner.

For the purposes of this country report, a desktop research was conducted. It aimed to review European and national publications and statistics to present the level of digital literacy in the country, trends and opportunities for the society. The main sources, which were from high importance for the research were as following, the publications of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020 for Bulgaria, The Media Literacy Index 2019: Just think about it published by Open Society Institute Sofia and statistical data from the National Statistical Institute. The collected information provided us with an overview of the development of the digital society in the country and its the progress. Policies for the development of digital skills and opportunities for different age groups were highlighted.

Data were collected in three phases: survey, interviews and focus groups. The different methods allowed an in-depth study of the opinion of the target group.

- The survey was designed to cover respondents from different groups: people 55+ and representatives of adult and youth training organizations. In Bulgaria, the survey was distributed through different channels. The total number of 70 respondents was reached where 24.29% as representatives of organizations and 75.71% as individuals. More than 80% of the respondents are women and more than 40% of them are represents the age group of 55+.

- The second phase of data collection was conducting of five interviews per country focused on experts representing training providers and especially those who are working in older adults. We have conducted interviews with representatives of National Third Age University; NGOs working with older adults, social service provider and volunteer organization. The variety of expertise brought a wide range of perspectives and ensured the quality of research findings.

- The focus groups aimed to finalize the data collection. Two different focus groups were conducted in Bulgaria: one f2f with 10 participants and one online with 12 participants. Representatives of different stakeholders took part of both of the focus groups. Volunteers, trainers, older adults, training providers review the data collected through the survey and

shared their opinions about the digital and media literacy in Bulgaria as well with the training needs and opportunities.

3. Digital literacy among older persons: an overview on the state of the art

In this section we present information we were able to access related the digital literacy and digital competences and media literacy of older persons in our country. Very little was found though. Most of the resourses are presenting general data, trends and/or speicifics but very few are covering different age groups and their speicific needs.

However, relevant materials were found in international researches, documents such as governmental bodies, national statistics information, and NGO initiatives. The most resent are presented below.

3.1. General data on digital literacy and the digital divide

Bulgaria ranks 28th out of the 28 EU countries in the European Commission digital economy and society index (DESI) for 2020. Although its overall score has risen to 36.4, it now ranks lower than before on the basis of data prior to the pandemic. Bugaria performs relatively well in connectivity, specifically as regards the wide availability of ultrafast and mobile broadband networks. It has made significant improvements in e-government, with rising numbers of users and a high score in providing digital public services for business.

In human capital, Bulgaria has moved up two steps in the ranking since last year. However, its level of digital skills is among the lowest in the EU. People with at least basic digital skills account for 29% of the total adult population, against an EU average of 58%, while only 11% have skills above a basic level (just under a third of the EU average). Bulgaria's performance is also well below average as regards the integration of digital technology. Bulgarian firms are not yet taking full advantage of the

opportunities online commerce offers: 7% of SMEs sell online (against an EU average of 18%), 3% of total SMEs make cross-border sales, and only 2% of their turnover comes from the online segment.[1]

A survey on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) usage in households and by individuals is a part of the European statistical programme and has been carried out in Bulgaria in 2019. It shows that in 2019, the households with children used the global network more actively as 90.5% of them had internet access, compared to 70.0% of the households without children. In 2019, 24.8% of the households did not have internet access at home. Half of them (50.3%) considered that they did not need it (not useful, not interesting, etc.), 41.9% stated that the main reason was the lack of skills for working with internet, and according to 24.3% the equipment was expensive.[2]

In the same survey we find also data concerning the use of e-Government and Electronic commerce: In the last 12 months, 25.4% of the individuals used the global network for interaction with the public and local authorities, as follows: 19.8% obtained information from public administration's websites or apps; 12.5% downloaded official forms; 10.2% submitted completed forms online. The share of individuals who bought goods or services for private use over the internet in the last 12 months was 21.7%. Most active in online shopping were those in age group 25 - 34 years with relative share 40.4%, while only 2.1% of individuals aged 65 - 74 years purchased online. Females were more active in online shopping than males - respectively 22.7% and 20.6%. [3]

Internet security has also been subject to the survey. Mainly, security-related concerns limited or prevented individuals from providing personal information to social or professional networking services (10.7%), but this relative share decreased twice compared to 2015.[4]

The current COVID-19 crisis is having an important impact on key societal indicators, relating to the use of internet services by citizens. This does not show in the latest 2019 official statistics as reported in DESI. Consequently, the DESI 2020 findings need to be read in conjunction with the strained demand that has been put on digital infrastructure and services during the pandemic and the immediate actions taken by the Member States. Similarly, as Europe progressively exits from the pandemic, the recovery must be planned taking into account the lessons learnt from this crisis. This means a particular attention to the indicators relevant for a stronger and more resilient digital transformation and economic recovery, notably very high capacity networks (VHCNs) and 5G, digital skills, advanced digital technologies for businesses and digital public services.

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[1] Digital Economy and Society Index, Bulgaria (DESI) 2020, Bulgaria
[2] https://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/ICT_hh2019_en_LDOBNRL.pdf
[3] https://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/ICT_hh2019_en_LDOBNRL.pdf
[4] https://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/ICT_hh2019_en_LDOBNRL.pdf

The Ministry of Education and Science developed a National Portal for Digital Education and integrated Teams to support schools and a National digital library. With funding from the budget schools can finance the cost of providing home internet to students who do not have access to it and to distance learning. Bulgaria approved additional budget expenditure of BGN 7 million and redirected €20 million from the Operational Program "Regions for Growth" 2014-2020 for the purchase of equipment and materials. Through the operational programmes for cohesion policy, the authorities are mobilising another €495 million for measures alleviating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

The education system is currently being modernised. Although reforms do not fully capture the magnitude of the digital transformation, there is greater focus on improving digital skills levels.

Government support for training in STEM and ICT faculties has brought about a revised school curriculum. Computer modelling was introduced in the third year of school, starting in the 2018-2019 school year. There are now more classes with IT profiles in upper secondary school, such as the national programme 'Education for IT careers'.[5]

The national programme called 'Information and communication technologies (ICT) in pre-school and school education' provides €5,624,000 (2019) to improve the quality of e-learning, access to ICT, innovative teaching methods and training of teachers. Funds from the operational programme 'Science and education for intelligent growth' for building a modern, protected educational environment in schools and kindergartens, including display equipment and ICT teaching materials, provided €11,660,000 under the 'Education for tomorrow' project (2019 – 2022).

There are several activities designed to develop digital skills, involving a variety of stakeholders.

Examples include private companies providing free training in coding or an online course in cyber hygiene for schoolchildren, developed in collaboration with the State eGovernment Agency. The Bulgarian Digital National Alliance organises activities designed to boost digital skills among the general public. In 2019, EU Code Week Bulgaria organised 615 events with around 47,000 participants.

Bulgaria continues to rank 27th in the use of internet services with an overall score well below the EU's:

67% of Bulgarians use internet against an EU average of 85%, while 24% have never used it – the highest level of non-use in the EU. Bulgarian internet users make more use of video calls than users elsewhere in the EU. They are also well above the EU average when it comes to social network activities (78% vs 65%). 66% of internet users read news online, a figure which is below the EU average. Bulgarian internet users are less keen to use other online services, especially online banking. Although

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[5] Digital Economy and Society Index, Bulgaria (DESI) 2020, Bulgaria

use of e-banking has risen slightly, only 13% of internet users take advantage of it compared with the EU average of 66%. Only 31% of internet users shop online, against an EU average of 71%.

The Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications is in the process of drawing up a document entitled 'Digital Transformation of Bulgaria for 2020-2030'. That will cover the potential of digital transformation for growth, work and prosperity, healthcare, energy policy, equal opportunities and social participation, and government transparency. The technological changes associated with digitisation include the use of ICT in manufacturing (Industry 4.0), big data and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as the Internet of Things (IoT), smart living and smart transport.

The National Program "Digital Bulgaria 2025" and Road map for its implementation are adopted by CM Decision №730/05-12-2019. The Program is a continuation of the National Program "Digital Bulgaria 2015", taking into account the achievements and the new European strategic and programming guidelines for achieving a smart, sustainable and inclusive digital growth for the period up to 2025 which aims at modernizing and widespread implementation of intelligent IT solutions in all areas of the economy and social life by creating an environment for widespread use of information and communication technologies , new technologies for businesses and citizens, uniform standards and a high level of network and information security and interoperability. It sets out the objectives, measures and activities related to the development and widespread use of ICT, the commitment of the different institutions within their sectoral policies.

Six key priority areas for action to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive digital growth in the period up to 2025 are identified:

- Establishment of appropriate conditions for the development and accessibility of digital networks and services;

- Developing a dynamic and innovative digital economy and increasing its growth potential;
- Enhancement of digital competence and skills;
- Ensuring effective and high-quality public e-services for business citizens and government;
- Promoting a secure cyber ecosystem: addressing the challenges of cybersecurity;
- Internet governance.[6]

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[6]   https://www.mtitc.government.bg/en/category/85/national-program-digital-bulgaria-2025-and-road-map-its-implementation-are-adopted-cm-decision-no73005-12-2019

The Media Literacy Index was created in 2017 as a response to the 'post-truth' phenomenon3 to measure the potential for resilience to 'post-truth', 'fake-news' and their consequence in a number of European countries and contribute to finding solutions.

According to the Media Literacy Index research Bulgaria takes 29 place from 35 countries of media literacy. Media Literacy Index and Corruption Perception Index (CPI)8 scores as countries with high Media Literacy score are perceived to be less corrupt and vice versa. The countries with the highest scores in media literacy have the lowest level of corruption where Bulgaria is taking one of the least places.

Quite tellingly, another meaning of corruption is "the process by which a word or expression is changed from its original state to one regarded as erroneous or debased" with synonyms "falsification, doctoring, manipulation, manipulating, fudging, adulteration, debasement, degradation, abuse, subversion, misrepresentation"9 This adds another frame of reference in the relationship between fake news and corruption with misinformation defined as "intentional corruption of the information ecosystem on which modern civilization depends."

Distrust in scientists is another issue worth exploring as rising distrust in authorities and experts may be linked to the rise of fake news and the 'post-truth' phenomenon. Bulgaria has high levels of distrust in scientists with close to 20%-25% and at the same time low scores in media literacy.

Distrust in media has accompanied the rise in misinformation.[7]

3.2. Needs for digital literacy among older persons

Looking again to the survey on the usage of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households and by individuals we find numbers related to the use of Internet: In 2019, 66.8% of the individuals aged between 16 and 74 years used the internet every day or at least once a week at home, at work or any other place and 53.9% took advantage of the resources of the global network several times during the day. The most active users of the internet were those with tertiary education (91.7%), as well as the young people aged between 16 and 24 years - 90.3%. In 2019, one quarter (24.5%) of the people have never used the internet. The most preferred device to access the internet away from home or work was the mobile phone (incl. smartphone) which was used by 63.2% of the people. However, in the age group 55 - 64 years, the percentage drops to 44, 5% for mobile/smart phones and

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[7] https://osis.bg/?p=3356&lang=en

17,2% for laptops and tablets. For the age group 65 – 74 years the persentage of mobile/smart phones is 14%, whereas only 6,1% use laptops and tablets. Share of the individuals who used cloud services is 8,4% for the age group 55 – 64, while for the age group 65 – 74 is 1,5%.

Following the report are numbers for the goods and services bought over the internet where we can see that for the last 12 months 8,9% of the respondents have answered positively and in the age group 65 – 74 years the percentage is 2,1% for the same period of time.[8]

Taking into account the results of the surveys run by the National Statistical Institute, International surveys and other sources, we my easily sum up that being on the bottom of most of the tables, in Bulgaria, the older persons has to cover a huge gap in their digital and media literacy which gives a big room for various initiatives, starting from giving access to different internet connected devices such as tablets, laptops, pc's, providing basic digital literacy courses, more advance digital literacy courses, cyber security, and any other which may lead to a better digital inclusion.

4. Consolidating older person's digital literacy: a review of our local findings

4.1. Needs for digital literacy - the professional's perspective

Although the publications and statistics clearly highlight the need to increase digital literacy for all age groups, older people are much more vulnerable to social exclusion due to the lack of digital literacy and even the lack of access to digital devices.

The opinion of the experts who took part in the different phases of the study (questionnaire, interview or focus group) is united on the tendency to improve digital literacy not only of people 55+, but also

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[8] https://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/ICT_hh2019_en_LDOBNRL.pdf

of the whole society as a need for more effective social inclusion. However, the 55+ group remains in the shadow of all efforts aimed at improving digital skills.

Experts are definitive that clear and general characteristics of the age group and its training needs cannot be given, as it is very heterogeneous in profile, interests, level of education and learning opportunities.

There is a very contrasting difference in the level of digital literacy and the interests for increasing the competencies of the age group 55-65 and that over 65 years of age. Experts emphasize this observation as crucial in planning training initiatives for older adult.

The opinion shared by the experts who filled in the online questionnaire is united around the insufficient skills of adults to use Internet and social media, with which the experts we interviewed agreed.

The most desirable areas for improvement include: the desire for confidence in the use of the Internet in general, the use of online services (online banking, online shopping and online public administration). The interviewed professionals and representatives of organizations that participated in the online survey agree that the level of recognition of fake news makes it difficult for members of this age group, which is also an area for improving.

Judging by the answer to the question asked in the online questionnaire (Q53: I think people over 55 will benefit from training on the topics…), experts believe that any training will benefit this group from the use of digital devices to the development of critical thinking. The same opinion is shared by the professionals who participated in the interview.

An important point is their opinion that the attitude of adults towards the digital society is essential for their inclusion in educational initiatives and can be considered as a separate topic.

During the focus group discussions, the views of professionals (trainers and volunteers) also covered the above-mentioned highlights.

It was very important for them to emphasize the difference in the needs of adults under and over 65, where the younger age group still in working age has digital skills and can use the Internet freely, while those who have already retired lag behind in developing these skills.

Training topics outlined by the professionals during the discussions were: online security; manipulation, critical thinking, personal boundaries to inclusion in a digital society, etc.

Again, the focus was on personal attitudes towards inclusion in digital learning activities.

Another very important conclusion made after the study (questionnaire, interviews and focus groups) with representatives of training organizations is that among older people the concept of digital literacy is accepted as basic skills for working with digital devices and it is very important to introduce the extended concept. , including media literacy and critical thinking.

4.2. Preferences for digital literacy - an older person's perspective

Analyzing the collected information based on the self-assessment of older people about their digital skills and their desire to improve, we again notice a difference in the opinion and attitudes of people in the age group 55-65 years and those over 65 years of age.

During the study, they participated in: the online study - 50 participants aged between 45-85 years and 8 people in focus groups in the age group 55+.

The results of the online questionnaire show a good self-assessment by the respondents for their skills in using online media and digital devices (out of 48 respondents, 38 respondents positively assess your abilities). The answers to question 63 (I have already formed the digital skills I need) support the data above with a positive result of 72.91%. The same trend is observed in the following issues related to misinformation and fake news.

There is a change in the positive self-esteem in the answers of the older respondents when it comes to their fears of navigating the Internet, where there is no unambiguous answer and opinions are blurred between the possible answers.

Respondents' desire to improve their digital skills covers all aspects from the use of digital devices to critical thinking. The only topic where there is no unambiguous answer is the distinction of fake news, where 20 out of 46 respondents gave a non-categorical answer (neither agree nor disagree).

The opinion expressed during the focus groups supports the data collected through the online questionnaire. The emotional responses that allow the form of the focus group method made it possible to highlight the motivators for increasing the digital inclusion of older people. Remarks like "if you're not on Facebook, you're gone", "if you're not on the internet, you're offboard" allow us to confirm the hypothesis of social isolation in adults who do not have digital skills. Topics such as privacy settings, site authenticity, etc. stood out. as desired learning topics.

4.3. Teaching and training on digital literacy

The project research shows that there are not many structured learning strategies and digital skills training programs for people 55+. The answers collected through the online questionnaire, interviews with experts and focus group discussions show that the training initiatives on the topic are rather partial on a project basis or voluntary, organized by NGOs or local communities.

The main organization dealing with the education and support of the elderly is the University of Third Age (https://nbu3age.org/) in Bulgaria. Basic digital skills courses are organized with the support of Sofia University. The activity of the organization depends on the support of third organizations and there is no permanent program in which those who wish can join.

Znanie Association (www.znanie-bg.org) has implemented over 18 short training programs for basic digital skills for people 60+. In 5 years, over 600 adults have undergone a short training course. The training aims to form basic skills for working with digital devices and organized on the principle of intergenerational learning.

In addition, the Znanie Association has implemented Silver Code project (https://www.silvercodeproject.eu/en/project.html) which aimed the creation of B-learning platform basic programming skills for people 55+.

Grand Experts project (http://grandexperts-project.odl.org), implemented with the partnership of Tulip Foundation. The project aims to enable older people with specific knowledge and experience to develop digital learning content themselves. In order to prepare as well as possible for their work as digital authors, they will be trained and supported by multimedia experts and trainers. At the end of the project, all developed learning materials will be published on a freely accessible platform and will be shared with interested people from all over Europe.

 Step IT Academy (https://itstep.bg/) organizes free computer training for older adults to help them acquire basic digital skills. With practical tasks, older people will have the opportunity to learn how to perform the most necessary tasks, such as using Internet programs to send messages and make calls, as well as how to handle various settings on your phone and computer.

All programs focused on developing basic digital skills. And although the need for media literature is evident from all research findings, no such course addressed to older adults seems to exist in Bulgaria.

4.4. Examples of successful training initiatives and their transfer potential to anther public: older adults

Reseach shows that the only organisation dedicated to media literacy education in Bulgaria is The Media Literacy Coalition (https://gramoten.li/about-us/) brings together organizations in the fields of education, journalism and civic participation, academics and media literacy experts.

The Coalition is open to joining all organizations that support the mission and are active in the field of education. The organisation works to integrate media literacy fully into the educational process and to increase media literacy in society. The aim is to develop critical thinking and creativity, first of all, for children and young people in the digital-media world, but also for all other age groups in Bulgaria.

The objectives of the organisation are as following:

- Developing digital media literacy from the beginning to the end of the educational process.
- Building partnerships and cooperation with all organizations and institutions relevant to education and media literacy in Bulgaria (ministries, non-governmental organizations, media, etc.).
- Promoting the importance of digital media literacy among different target groups (parents, teachers, media and the general public).

4.5. Specific training programmes for older persons' digital literacy

The results of the study show that in order to ensure successful training program for older person in the field of digital and media literacy, some specific conditions must be met:

- Participants must have a preparatory training module focused on motivation and combating prejudices about the digital world.
- The interaction between trainers and trainees must be built on the principle of mutual respect.

- Terminology and topics should be tailored to the characteristics of adult learners.

- Topics must be in line with the interests of the learners

- The possibility of dividing groups with different levels of knowledge can lead to better results.

- Training programm must be focused on practical tasks and experiential learning

5. Conclusion and insights for the design of the DIGITOL Academy

The globalizing and digitalisation of the societies are becoming not a tendency but a reality, which is unavoidable. „If you are not online, you don't exist." – this is not anymore an exotic sentence but a conclusion which came up from most of the interviews and focus groups we conducted.

One of the main finding was that the older persons in Bulgaria are not in the light of the radar when it comes to surveys related to use of the ICT. Despite that fact, if they appear at all, they are at the bottom of the charts with the least access to digital devices, the least digital skills, the least access to training opportunities. We have plenty to do for catching up the modern society in terms of digitalisation of the third age representatives.

This is worth it to mention that there is a quite a difference when speaking for the age group of 55- 64 and 65-74. The level of skills, the type of the activities performed, the services used, are sometimes more than twice less in the latter group. Yet the both groups are far not confident enough to take active part in the digital world and take advange of the digital tools and recourses avalable.

Very few good practices which are transferable were found. But during the interviews we received valuable comments in terms of the possible activities.

The intergenerational approach is one of most common ones and ensures transition of the knowledge between the generation not only in terms practical skills and knowlede but in better understanding of the digital literacy and digital world.

When speaking about digital skills in terms of basic capacities in operating with digital devices, media literacy, critical thinking and a proficiency to identify reliable online information, there should be one ground precondition to be covered, namely, basic digital competences for all the age groups, to step on a firm ground.

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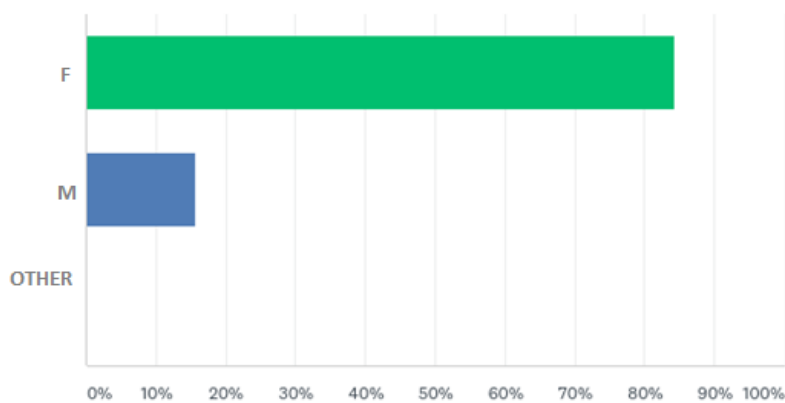
Annex

Annex 1: Analytics from the survey

To Date the survey was created: Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Total number of responses: 70

Complete Responses: 52

Demographic analytics for Bulgaria

<u>Gender</u>

Age

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-18	0.00%	0
18-25	2.86%	2
25-35	14.29%	10
35-45	11.43%	8
45-55	27.14%	19
55-65	30.00%	21
65-75	12.86%	9
75-85	1.43%	1
85-95	0.00%	0
95+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		70

Organisations vs. Individuals

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Representative of organisation	24.29%	17
Individual	75.71%	53
TOTAL		70

Annex 2: List of stakeholders interviewed

Name	Organisation	Location	Website
Elena Drumeva	Timeheroes	Bulgaria	https://timeheroes.org/bg/
Phd. Gancho Popov	Third age University	Bulgaria	https://nbu3age.org/
Steli Peteva	Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation (ICSS)	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://www.icss-bg.org/?lang=en
Miroslava Georgieva	Tulip foundation	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://www.tulipfoundation.net/bg/index/
Ralica Popova	Knowledge Association Lovech	Lovech, Bulgaria	http://znanielovech.org/

Annex 3: List of stakeholders that participated in focus groups

Organisation	Location	Website
KUTU Ltd	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://www.linkedin.com/company/kutu-ltd./
ESN Bulgaria	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://esnbg.org/
Заедно в час	Bulgaria	https://zaednovchas.bg/
Knowledge Association Lovech	Lovech, Bulgaria	http://znanielovech.org/
Knowledge Association Smolyan	Smolyan, Bulgaria	https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Non-Governmental-Organization--NGO-/%D0%94%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B6%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%A1%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8F%D0%BD-%D0%94%D0%A0%D0%97-%D0%A1%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8F%D0%BD-918603434838884/
Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation (ICSS)	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://www.icss-bg.org/?lang=en
Tulip Foundation	Sofia, Bulgaria	https://www.tulipfoundation.net/bg/index/

Annex 4: Analytics from the focus groups

Date	Number of participants	% F/ % M	Average Age	Participant Organisations
19/05/2020	10	35%M65%F	45	KUTU Ltd, ESN Bulgaria, Заедно в час (teachers network), volunteers, trainers and people 55+
29/05/2020	12	100%F	55	Knowledge Association Smolyan, Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation, Digital Academy Ltd., Knowledge Association Lovech, Tulip Foundation, Alternativi International