digitol

Context Analysis Report

A cross-country analysis of digital literacy training for generations to combat fake news together

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Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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This project has received funding from the Erasmus+ programme under grant agreement No 612208-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

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Technical References

Project Acronym	DIGITOL
Project Title	Digital Inclusion for Older People - Intergenerational synergies for the active participation in society
Project Coordinator	Antonio Dell'Atti, antonio.dellatti@comunitabrianza.it, Consorzio Comunita Brianza
Project Duration	January 2020 – December 2022 (24 months)

Report Name	Context Analysis Report - A cross-country analysis of digital literacy training for generations to combat fake news together
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Submission Date	20/08/2020

Acknowledgements

The work described in this publication has received funding from the Erasmus+ programme under grant agreement Nº 612208-EPP1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA3IPI-SOC-IN.

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The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Executive Summary

The present report discusses the results of a context analysis about the needs and preferences of older adults for digital and media literacy trainings. The context analysis is based on a desktop research, an online survey in five languages (Bulgarian, English, German, Greek, and Italian), interviews and focus groups with experts and older adults. The report combines and complements four national reports covering the same scope for Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Italy. On the basis of these results, the report draws up guidelines for the design and implementation of an innovative intergenerational training at the intersection of digital literacy and media literacy to address the challenge of combating disinformation and hate speech online.

The DIGITOL results are analysed in the light of the increasing complexity of disinformation, the challenge it poses to both our societies and democracies, as well as the various digital divides. The report offers a snapshot of the perceived needs and preferences for digital and media literacy trainings for older people from both the perspective of experts, as well as that of older people themselves. Furthermore, a number of existing training initiatives targeting various age groups are being analysed to identify best practice examples and key recommendations for the implementation of an intergenerational training program on digital and media literacy.

The analysis demonstrates a common interest across age groups for more digital proficiency and a shared curiosity for disinformation and how to tackle it. The results underline that a plethora of initiatives for digital literacy exist but that these often focus on the younger generations. Where older people are trained, most initiatives focus on digital skills to use digital devices and the Internet but very few address how to understand and interact with online content. These findings are consistent with the review of media literacy among older people by Rasi et al. (2020).

As a response to the lack of adequate training offers, the report concludes on a list of success factors for designing a successful intergenerational media literacy training, among which the consulted experts and older people list: quality and adequacy of the training programme with the practical needs of trainees, accessibility both of the content and format/logistics, appealing and tailored communication to reach out to the target trainees, excellent social skills of the trainers especially in interpersonal relationships, as well as a participatory and collaborative atmosphere ensuring mutual respect and ownership by participants from all age groups.

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1. Addressing fake news in an intergenerational approach

1.1. The relevance of DIGITOL

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. Several experts and associations have warned of the risks for people's health and security as false information about the virus and fake interventions became viral.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) qualified the phenomenon as an "infodemic" of planetary proportions[1]. Beyond the threats it poses to public health[2], the spread of false information is also problematic as it contributes to attract visitors on websites that sell COVID-19 related products that have not been verified or that do not work. Moreover, the isolation of the population has led to a new wave of scamming attempts targeting older people[3].

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.[4] Yet, despite the fact that older Europeans (aged 55 and older) growingly use the Internet, their presence online remains low in comparison to other age groups. In Europe, the prevalence of

[1] https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/un-tackling-%E2%80%98infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation-and-cybercrime-covid-19
[2] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200415-sitrep-86-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=c615ea20_4
[3] https://www.age-platform.eu/age-member-news/age-members-warn-against-online-fraud-during-covid-19
[4] https://euroageism.eu/policy_projects/internet-connectedness-of-older-adults-in-the-time-of-covid-19/

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digital illiteracy among EU older cohorts remain strikingly lower than in any other age groups. The DESI (2020) report for example concludes that 23% of those aged between 55 and 74 have never used the Internet; this is the highest ratio of all age groups. The lower level of digital literacy could be one of the reasons for American adults aged 65+ being more likely to share fake news on Facebook (Guess and Tucker, 2019).

Efforts to support the digital inclusion of older adults have taken place in several parts of Europe before and during the pandemic, either to provide access to digital equipment to older people who happened to be both at risk of social and digital exclusion[5] or to keep digital and media literacy projects going[6] despite the constraints linked to containment measures and lockdowns in various European countries.

These initiatives for digital inclusion of older adults – among other groups – should certainly not rest in intensity. However, the DIGITOL project rose from the conviction that the challenges of today's rapid digitalisation of information and services, and the related difficulties it poses in terms of reliability and trustworthiness of online news, require a renewal of how to approach digital literacy. Such an approach would 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.

To pave the way for such an approach, the European project DIGITOL conducts research and intends to develop innovative trainings to explore how strengthening the digital literacy of older people could contribute to bring them aboard of the combat against fake news. In this context, DIGITOL aims to organise intergenerational conversations in order to strengthen the digital and media literacy of all age groups and thus contain the spread of fake news that are at the roots of online hate speech, xenophobia, and populism. In this way, the training methods and materials that are developed by the project will contribute to promoting EU common values, such as solidarity and diversity.

[5] AGE Platform Europe. May 2020. *COVID-19 and human rights concerns for older persons.* Report available at: https://www.age-platform.eu/sites/default/files/Human_rights_concerns_on_implications_of_COVID-19_to_older_persons_updated_18May2020.pdf

[6] This is for instance the case of the project ‚Get Your Fact Straight' (#GYFS) that switched to online training sessions in the various countries where the project aimed to deliver media literacy trainings: https://alldigitalweek.eu/get-facts/news-events/

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1.2. Objectives and guiding questions

The present report is the result of the first phase of the project undertaken from January to June 2020 and provides an analysis of the local, national and European contexts regarding the needs for digital and media literacy of older people as well as existing trainings initiatives, whether they target older people directly or not. This context analysis will contribute to informing and guiding the further implementation of the project, especially the design of the Digital Social Academy[7].

The report builds on 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[8]. It also includes information, ideas and suggestions on all aspects relevant for the implementation of the project that were gathered through the direct engagement of stakeholders at national and European levels. This information was collected by means of an online survey available in five languages, interviews with experts and direct discussions with older people through the method of the focus group.

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 among 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 Academy?

[7] The DIGITOL Digital Social Academy will be a content-aware & multifunctional tool allowing users to access data, training materials and the other interactive educational tools: https://digitol.eu/academy
[8] Four national reports have been produced following the data collection and consultation of stakeholders at national level in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and Italy. They are retrievable on the DIGITOL website.

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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 present chapter 1.

Subsequently, a brief description of the methodology for the desk research and data collection will be provided in chapter 2 before presenting the general landscape of the digital divide in Europe and the needs for digital literacy trainings in chapter 3. The findings from the data collection – in particular the needs and preferences for digital literacy training of older adults – are presented in chapter 4, while chapter 5 focuses on the existing initiatives and success factors identified during the various consultations of experts and older people. On the basis of this data, Chapter 6 discusses the key factors for the successful of digital literacy trainings and the implementation of the Digital Social Academy while chapter 7 provides a brief summary of the main findings.

1.3. Key Concepts

DIGITOL adopts an intergenerational approach to teaching digital and media literacy, building on the respective competences of more naturally proficient users (younger Europeans) and less digitally-literate users (older Europeans), in order to combat 'fake news'. Especially 'fake news' is contested as a term. In order to provide clarity on these key concepts, the following section provides an outline and brief discussion of some of the core terms and phrases that are used in the frame of this report – and more widely as part of the DIGITOL project.

1.3.1. 'Fake news' and disinformation

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 Expert Group on fake news and online disinformation (HLEG) (European Commission DG CNECT, 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

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automated amplification techniques that are used by different actors for example to infiltrate grassroots groups or to influence and undermine democratic processes in EU countries.

According to the HLEG, the term 'fake news' 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 to dismiss coverage they do not agree with. For these reasons, the HLEG avoids the use of the term and instead suggests that the issue at stake is better described with the term disinformation. 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' (European Commission DG CNECT, 2018: 10).

According to the European Commission's communication on tackling on-line disinformation, 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. 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: 1-2). While disinformation can be harmful, the HLEG's report makes it clear that it still is to be distinguished from other illegal forms of speech, such as **defamation or hate speech** which falls under the regulatory remedies of EU or national laws.

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 for communication and dissemination purposes only (not for training). During educational activities, it will be made clear that disinformation and 'fake news' are different concepts covering different scopes of realities.

For the sake of clarity, the DIGITOL educational activities might prefer to rely on the work[9] of Claire Wardle who provided several definitions in relation to information disorder (Wardle, 2018). According to her, the buzz word of 'fake news' could be broken down into three distinct concepts:

[9] https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/infodisorder-definitional-toolbox/

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- misinformation is "**mistakes**", that is to say inaccurate news that are usually shared with good intentions;
- disinformation is "**lies**" or "hoaxes", which are deliberately spread false news; and
- malinformation is "**gossip**", which may perhaps be correct but is intended to harm.

1.3.2. Digital and media literacy

DIGITOL foresees to combat hate speech and disinformation by increasing Europeans' digital and media literacy. 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.

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 internet 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' (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 the context of employment and entrepreneurship studied by the authors, digital literacy is understood as 'the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies' (Law et al. 2018: 6).

Media and digital literacy then overlap where skills necessary to the access, understanding, interaction with online information are at stake. With the rapid spread of digital technologies as means of information and communication, media and digital literacy become more and more

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intertwined. In a way, the technical skills part of one's digital literacy to use computers, tablets, or smartphones can be regarded as key competences to access but also to interact with online information that is available on social media or news websites.

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 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 framework highlights the interdependence of technical skills for the use of digital technology and more intangible skills for the critical understanding of and interaction with the content of these digital environments.

The first area refers to **information and data literacy**. This includes 'browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content' as well as 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'. This area of competence highlights the importance of media literacy when considering the use of digital technology.

Thus it becomes clear that both digital and media literacy are key in combatting the spread of disinformation and fake news. Tackling the disinformation challenge is not only a matter of bridging digital divides by ensuring the affordability and accessibility of digital technologies on the one hand, and improving technical skills of this digital equipment on the other hand. **Even more so, it is a matter of improving the media literacy of citizens of all age groups so that online participation relies on informed decisions and takes place in democratic and safe digital environments for all.**

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2. Methodology

This report relies on information and data obtained through desk research and the engagement of stakeholders through an online survey, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Partners of the DIGITOL project collected data on the online participation of older people, their knowledge and direct use of digital tools and their need and interest for media literacy trainings. All partners complied with data protection rules when collecting data. The different methods are described in detail below.

2.1. Online research

The online research is based on a systematic literature review and an online data analysis exploring the state of the art in the field of digital literacy, media literacy and age. The literature review served to identify all relevant published sources, studies carried out at international, national and regional level, which cover the current trends in digital literacy of people in old age. In addition, this research served to identify public, private and non-profit organisations working with older people, which could act as potential local partners for the training phase of older people. A synthesis of the results can be found in chapter 3.

2.2. Online survey

The aim of the online survey was to seek the perceived needs and interest for digital and media literacy trainings of older persons from the perspective of both local stakeholders and older people themselves (aged 55 years old and above). The survey has been disseminated locally and nationally through the networks of the four project partners based in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Italy as well as at European level through AGE Platform Europe. The survey was available in five languages to fit each national context (Bulgarian, English, German, Greek, and Italian) and used the online tool "Survey Monkey" (https://www.surveymonkey.com/). Older adults responded to questions about their own opinions on the use of digital tools and the Internet, while

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the experts were asked to assess the interests, competences and needs of older people and to name existing media literacy projects.

In total, 356 responses have been collected, of which 58 were answers provided by experts and 298 were answers of private individuals; a bit more than half of individual respondents belonged to age groups above 55 years old. The rest of the individual respondents are spread rather equally between groups aged 25 to 35, 35 to 45, and 45 to 55. Links to the national surveys can be found in the Annex 1; an aggregation of responses used for the analysis in chapter 4, 5, and 6 of the present report is available in the separate file for download.

2.3. Experts' interviews

The interviews provided a more in-depth source of information on experts' opinions regarding the differentiation of the target group, whether specific training offers were necessary for older people, the potential relevant content for trainings as well as important factors for the design of an intergenerational training approach. The interviews were targeted at a variety of relevant local stakeholders including representatives of public institutions, universities, NGOs, think tanks, and other organisations active in the field of digital literacy and media literacy training.

A total of 24 interviews have been conducted with local project partners in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Italy engaging with five relevant stakeholders each. Given the physical distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews have been conducted either by email, phone or online conference software. The names of the organisations participating in the interviews can be found in Annex 2. The results of the interviews are documented in the national reports and insights thereof have flown into the analysis in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

2.4. Focus groups

The focus group is a popular method to discuss the results of a study in order to retrieve further information. In DIGITOL, the method has been used to organise interactive discussions intended to gather ideas and suggestions from the participants concerning local needs, best practices and important points to consider for the design of an intergenerational digital and media literacy

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training. Following an introduction to the project, the participants – either local stakeholders or older persons themselves depending on the country – discussed the preliminary project results and their individual experiences relating to digital literacy and media literacy training. The results of the focus groups are documented in the national reports and insights thereof have flown into the analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, most focus groups took place online and in smaller groups while only few could take place in a face-to-face setting. A total of 8 focus groups were carried out by four project partners, involving a total of 91 participants. The list featuring the participating organisations can be accessed in Annex 3, with further details of the composition of the focus group available in Annex 4.

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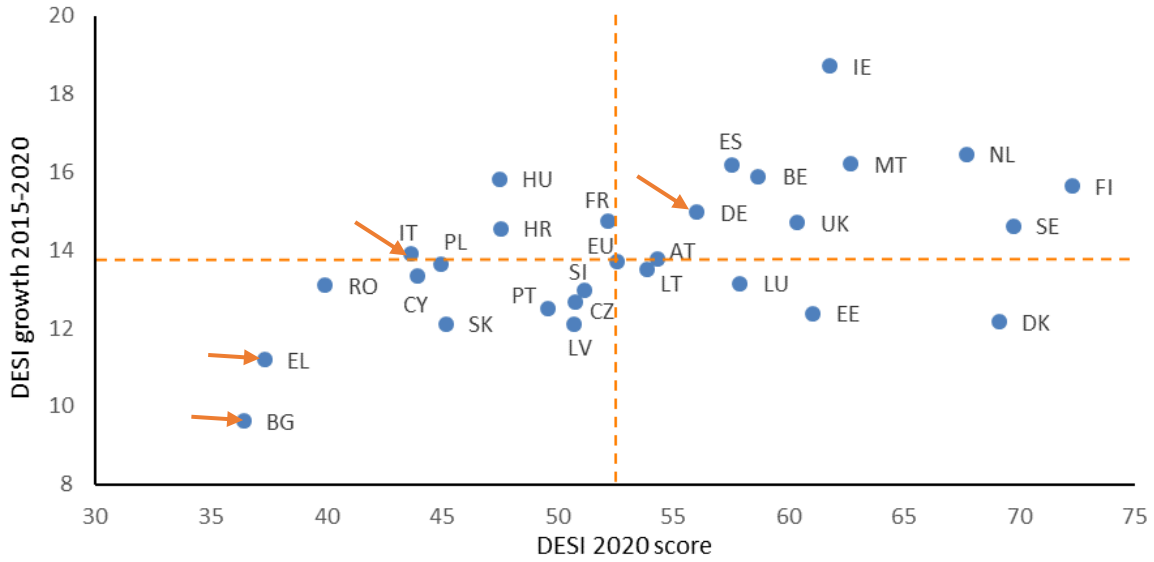
3. Digital literacy of older people: an overview

The most current data on digital literacy in Europe are provided by a report published annually by the Digital Economy and Skills Unit F.4 of the European Commission.

This unit is especially responsible for tracking progress and evaluation of the implementation of reforms to boost competitiveness, economic growth and social development. For this purpose, the unit is in charge of collecting and analysing socio-economic data leading to the annual publication of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). [10]

The index is calculated on the basis of various socio-economic variables and by observing its variations it is possible to outline a picture of the performance and competitiveness of individual European countries in relation to a European average.



[10] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/content/digital-economy-and-skills-unit-f4

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The above figure from the Full European DESI Report 2020 [11] shows the progress of Member States as regards the overall level of digitisation of the economy and society over the last 5 years. It is measured in terms of the progression of their DESI score over that period of time.

The arrows indicate the member countries of the DIGITOL project. Since DESI data are also aggregated on a national basis, they have been widely considered in the drafting of the national reports that led to the compilation of this overall report.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important digital assets have become to our economies and how basic and advanced digital skills sustain our economies and societies, but this seems to be a challenge in many EU Countries, as in the DESI Report 2020 outlined:

> "Although already 85% of citizens used the internet in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, only 58% possesses at least basic digital skills. Therefore, having an internet connection is not sufficient; it must be paired with the appropriate skills to take advantage of the digital society".[12]

3.1. Digital divides in Europe

Following the data of the DESI 2020 report about the human capital, over the last 4 years it can be observed, that:

> "the level of digital skills has continued to grow slowly, reaching 58% of individuals having at least basic digital skills, 33% with above basic digital skills and 61% of individuals having at least basic software skills. The skills indicators are strongly influenced by socio-demographic aspects. For example, 82% of young individuals (16-24), 85% of those with high formal education, 68% of employed or self-employed people and 87% of students have at least basic digital skills. By contrast, **only 35% of those aged 55-74 and 30% of the retired and the inactive possess basic skills**."[13]

The DESI (2020) analysis suggests as potential training needs to enhance older person's digital competences and digital literacy by software skills and by internet use.

[11] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi
[12] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi
[13] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital

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About software skills the European data show very different tendencies on Regional scale but common trends about the distribution of the needs in the demography:

> "[…] 61% of Europeans have at least basic software skills. In Member States like the Netherlands, Finland and the UK, three out of four individuals have at least basic software skills (80%, 77% and 75% respectively). In contrast, only 31% of Bulgarians and 35% of Romanians have at least basic software skills". [14]

This gap can be observed also analysing the data and trends regarding the internet users:

> "In Europe the most active internet users are young individuals with 97% of those aged between 16 and 24 being regular internet users, those with a high level of formal education (97%) and students (98%). There is a high number of non-users among people with no or low education levels (24%), among those aged between 55 and 74 (23%), and the retired and the inactive (26%)".[15]

This last set of data conveys the idea that that not all older people need to grow their digital literacy. Some older people are very tech-savvy and have had the professional careers that gave them the opportunity to develop advanced digital skills.

The digital exclusion is a reality affecting people from disadvantaged communities: in this sense vulnerable groups are more exposed to not have access to IT equipment or the internet to be able to participate in online learning. [16]

Actions aimed at bridging the digital gap must therefore be oriented towards a complex initiative that takes into account a series of different factors at a social and individual level.

3.2. Digital literacy, media literacy, and age

Digital and media literacy are the keys for the digital participation in the society of the future. Training these competences is a matter of social inclusion for a real participation in all phases of individuals' life. A quotation from the European Council briefly reflects the latest research results and summarizes the subject in the following way:

[14] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital
[15] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital
[16] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/covid-19-digital-exclusion-reality

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> "In promoting media literacy, special attention should be paid to the fact that different groups in society may have different needs and behaviours and different ways of accessing media. For example, children and young people often have a natural willingness to use new media and new technologies, while adults may have a greater wealth of experience that can be used to develop critical thinking about media content. Media literacy strategies must take full account of all these differences and promote communication between different groups and interests in society. At the same time, strategies to make technologies widely available and accessible to citizens should be pursued," (Council of the European Union 2009, 3)[17]

That there are different needs and interests among the various age groups has been shown in the studies in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and Italy, with differences occurring not only between the generations, but also within the age group of 50-75 year-olds.

In Bulgaria taking into account the results of the surveys run by the National Statistical Institute, International surveys and other sources, older persons have to cover a huge gap in their digital and media literacy, while in Germany, standing in the middle range of the DESI table, it has been demonstrated that different groups within the age cohort are more involved with digital media than others.[18]

It is important to note that several variables are increasingly influencing the digital use of media: in Italy for instance the digital gap is also a kind of gender gap[19] related also to the region of origin, where southern regions show a lower average of digital progress in comparison with regions from the north. [20] This Italian trend offers the opportunity to reflect about the issue of female participation to digital life also at European level. In the EU, men are more advantaged in terms of overall digital skills (information, communication, problem solving and software skills) compared to women, particularly among older people (55+).[21] Altogether, this shows how gender intersects with age and education in the acquisition of certain digital skills, especially given the fast pace of digitalisation and risk of exclusion if people are not able to enjoy the benefits

[17] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0003&from=EN
[18] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/human-capital
[19] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/scoreboard/italy
[20] https://www.agendadigitale.eu/cittadinanza-digitale/desi-regionale-2019-litalia-digitale-e-divisa-in-due-e-lontana-dalla-ue/
[21] Eurostat, ISOC [isoc_sk_dskl_i]

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of digital skills equally.[22] The gender lens thus needs to be considered throughout life in an intersectional approach to ensure that women can enjoy their rights at all stages of their life.

This approach has to go beyond the national strategies[23] launched in each country taking part in our project creating the opportunity for a more individualised support in training courses for older persons in order to be able to include more people, both frequent users and the "hesitant" ones. As there are different levels of prior knowledge ("*Internet milieus*") and learning speeds between generations and within the age groups themselves, the starting point for the training should be the individual's lifeworld and their experience. This means that the older people who are to be trained should be involved in the conception and planning of the training courses, as well as the younger trainers.

A very recent study from Finland about "Promoting Media Literacy Among Older People" (Päivi Rasi, Hanna Vuojärvi, Susanna Rivinen) published in May 2020[24] offers a systematic overview about understanding of how to foster media literacy among older people and underlines some critical points and open questions which affect the perception of the needs expressed by older people regarding their media literacy.

According to the review by Rasi et al., topics like creativity and digital participation of older people are not yet in the focus of the research regarding media literacy interventions. Instead, **focus has largely been on older people's competencies in using digital technologies while almost no research has been done on interventions regarding older people's capacity to understand online information or to create digital content** for a better participation in society.

In addition, the review noted that, in those cases in which literacy interventions were found to be targeting older people's capacity to understand and create digital content, **the scope was very limited to older people's understanding of health literacy** and only one article was found to have covered the creation of life stories.

[22] http://www.oecd.org/internet/bridging-the-digital-gender-divide.pdf
[23] https://innovazione.gov.it/assets/docs/MID_Book_2025.pdf, http://elke.eap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/dsgr_action_plan_eng_subm4_no-memo.pdf, https://news.bg/education,
[24] https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741713620923755

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The review highlights that **the vast majority of studies focused on older people's lifelong learning and personal fulfilment** (e.g. use ICT to use eHealth services or to fight loneliness) but **very few considered older people as citizens participating in democratic and societal debates**.

Additionally, **the review stressed the importance of a needs-based approach**. This would include fostering older people's self-efficacy as the users of digital technologies and media while providing social support for learning. In this regard, **the review (Rasi et al. 2020) confirms the advantages of peer-to-peer teaching and intergenerational approaches in media-literacy interventions for older people.** However, it also highlights that few interventions have so far focused on participants' creative media-production processes and that those should be further explored.

Based on the review, it can be concluded that interventions aimed at fostering media literacy in older people need further development and creative enrichment in terms of aims, content, providers, recipients, and pedagogical approaches.

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4. Perceived needs for training of older people

The DIGITOL survey described in Chapter 2 compiles responses from two categories of respondents: representatives of organisations active in the field of digital literacy and/or disinformation and individuals. This chapter is dedicated to the perceived need for digital literacy trainings for older people by organisations active in this domain (section 4.1) before presenting the needs and preferences for trainings by individual respondents (section 4.2).

4.1. The professionals' perspective

This section aims at providing an insight on how organisations active in the field of digital literacy and/or disinformation perceive the need for training of older people's digital literacy. The present section provides an overview of the professionals' appreciation of this need given their field experience. As such, it provides complementary information to the objective needs assessment based on large scale statistics and presented in Chapter 3.

The experts who took part in the different phases of the DIGITOL study seem to agree on the need to improve digital literacy of the whole society as a way to ensure more effective social inclusion. When it comes specifically to older people, the majority of professional respondents to the DIGITOL survey (n= 31 responses in total[25]) consider that older adults do not have the basic digital competences to actively engage with online media and digital devices. On the matter of using the Internet and social media, respondents seem divided: as a matter of fact, slightly more than a third of the respondents considering older people do not have the basic skills to use the Internet and social media, while another third abstains and slightly less than a third considers older people have those basic skills. Similar results are observed with the statement "Older persons dread the Internet and social media".

[25] Aggregation of responses from all five language versions of the DIGITOL survey. The whole statistical data used in this report are available as a separate file.

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The heterogeneity of older people and their perceived needs for digital and media literacy training was further specified during interviews by some stakeholders active in the field. Experts confirmed that **no general training needs can be unequivocally stated regarding older people, as the group is widely diverse in profiles, interests, level of education and learning opportunities**. Several professionals emphasized the difference between the needs of adults under and over 65, where the younger age group still in working age can encounter more opportunities to grow his/her digital skills in a professional context, while those who have already retired could face bigger difficulties to access digital device or opportunities to develop/use their digital skills.

Experts acknowledge that digital skills very much depend on socio-economic factors and one's living environment: regardless of their age, people with low educational attainment, experiencing poverty, living with a disability, people with a migrant background, or those more isolated (e.g. because they do not have children or grandchildren, because they live remotely, because they are discriminated, etc.) could be prioritised as they are less likely to interact with individuals who are theoretically more digitally literate. Different emerging needs can be distinguished at any age: one trainer with a background of training vulnerable social groups, such as migrants and refugees, stated that older adults in rural areas as well as refugees are the most in need of digital training in order to cope with everyday life challenges. Given this great diversity, the selection of groups with similar needs rather than similar profile appears critical to create activities in which the contents can be adapted to the target to which they are directed.

When considering the capacity to access, understand, and interact with the media more specifically, experts here again recommend that media literacy is accessible to all (including all age groups). Yet from a strategic point of view, where prioritisation is needed (e.g. due to limited resources), professional interviewees suggest to primarily target people that are likely to promote the importance of media literacy among their peers (capable of initiating a snowball effect). According to a media literacy expert, the digital literacy of a user does not necessarily correlate with his/her capacity to show critical thinking towards online information. As they put it: "*Younger generations, especially those "born with the internet", tend to be more accustomed to online services, but they might need to be made aware of the risk of excessive familiarity with such tools (digital footprint, app permissions, online advertising and monetisation, …).*"

When asked about specific actions that can be performed online, representatives of professional organisations seem to have a rather common view of priority usages that older people would like

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to make of the Internet. As a matter of fact, an overwhelming majority of respondents agree or fully agree that **if equipped with the adequate digital skills, older persons could benefit from digital opportunities, be it to find online information, use digital communication for socialisation purposes, or access digitalised services** for instance. The benefits of digitalised services were again stressed in interview responses especially for people with reduced mobility to access medical, governmental, and utility services that are necessary to meet their basic needs.

When it comes to specific opportunities offered by digitalisation, the vast majority of professional respondents consider that older persons want to become more proficient users of the Internet in general (example provided in the survey: web navigation for information finding) and more proficient users of digital communication tools (WhatsApp, Viber, Skype, etc.). Although to a lesser extent, a majority of respondents also agrees or fully agrees that older people want to become more proficient users of digitalised services (tax paying, banking, e-shopping, public consultation, etc.) as well as of social media.

According to professionals, it is unclear if older people are interested in disinformation and fake news nor whether older people are considered particularly good at critical thinking. A much clearer picture of older people's interest in disinformation ensues from the self-assessment of older respondents themselves (see section 4.2). However, professional respondents seem to have a common perception that older persons do not know how to distinguish fake news. Coherently, the vast majority of professional respondents agree or fully agree with the statement that "older people should be more informed about fake news". It should be noted here that the statements listed for rating (from fully disagree to fully agree) only asked for the situation of people aged 55 and over and did not survey the perceptions for digital literacy training for other age groups.

Several professionals stressed that digital literacy of older persons was often accepted in the strict sense of basic skills for using digital devices while **the increasing complexity of online information makes it more and more critical to introduce media literacy and critical thinking in digital literacy trainings for older people**, similarly to the initiatives targeting children/younger people (see section 5.1). Some experts added the importance to include in training concepts that fake news are often related to hate speech and conspiracy theories.

In a nutshell, when asked about what content professionals would prioritise in trainings for older adults, responses generally fell into three categories:

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- **Using the Internet to grow older people's participation**: e.g. to ensure older people have a say in public online debates and consultations, to contribute to fighting isolation, etc.
- **Making the most of digitalised services**: e.g. to ensure older people can keep managing their assets (digital banks), interact with their administration (pay online taxes or ask for social benefits), book medical appointments or receive digital prescriptions, etc.
- **Growing knowledge for a safe and responsible digital participation**: e.g. develop emotional and relational skills that are at stake in interpersonal relationships including in online communications, unveiling how information is constructed, teaching ways to identify and avoid online scams, training on how to distinguish fake news from reliable information ("crap detection"), etc.

For older people to become active participants of the digital world, it will be necessary to overcome several of the difficulties hampering the development of older people's digital skills. Among them, professionals have primarily identified the lack of accessible trainings and the absence of sufficient training offers. Among the other reasons perceived by professionals as potential factors hindering the development of older people's digital skills are: the lack of motivation and fear of the digital world by potential older trainees, the lack of interest of older people themselves, older people's lack of awareness of the existing training programmes, as well as the negative stereotypes surrounding older age. We will see in the following section that some of these reasons, in particular the lack of interest or lack of awareness are contradicted by the responses of older people (see section 4.2).

4.2. The older persons' perspective

The present section aims at giving an overview of older people's self-assessment of the current level of digital literacy, their former participation in formal or informal trainings, and their preferences for future education offers to grow older people's digital literacy. The section builds up on conversations with older people (focus groups) and individual responses provided online (DIGITOL survey in five languages)[26]. The survey analysis compares responses from individual respondents aged 55 and over (half of respondents)[27] with responses from people of all ages (incl.

[26] All statistics provided in this section are available in a separate file providing raw survey responses.
[27] Interestingly enough however, although the groups aged 55 to 85 represent 50% of the total pool of respondents, only 26% of individual respondents consider themselves an older person.

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older respondents)[28]. The dissemination of the survey via digital means might explain that the vast majority of respondents has been in capacity to fill in the survey by themselves while only 9 individuals declared having asked for help to respond.

By many aspects, older people do not show a different attitude regarding how they use media. Responses regarding media usage show no differences between age groups. As a matter of fact, a vast majority of older respondents – just like other age groups – discuss politics and societal issues with their family and friends. Almost all respondents use several sources to inform themselves about politics and society and declare being careful with sources. In focus groups, older people specified that although they would tend to trust information from the television (their main source of information) rather than social media, there was always a risk for journalism to be biased or controlled in order to generate profits or pursue political goals.

Slight age differences appear when it comes to self-assessment of one's digital skills and willingness to grow one's digital literacy: **if older respondents are slightly less numerous to declare having basic skills to use the Internet, the vast majority of them remain confident that they are equipped with the minimum requirements** to navigate our digital world. Similarly, there are a bit more than half of the older respondents to declare finding social media and the Internet intuitive and older people are marginally more numerous to express fears about the Internet than younger respondents. Consequently, older respondents are more willing to become more proficient users – be it of the devices in themselves, the Internet, social media, communication apps, or digitalised services – but only to a very small extent in comparison to the whole responding population. Regardless of their age, the majority of respondents agree or fully agree that if equipped with the adequate digital skills, they could benefit from the opportunities offered by our digitalised societies.

With regard to disinformation and fake news, **the vast majority of respondents regardless of their age shows interest in disinformation and wishes to be more informed about fake news** (both in the survey and during focus groups with older people). A subtle age difference can be noticed when it comes to the self-assessment of one's capacity to identify fake news: older adults are either neutral or positive about their capacity when a clear majority of the whole population feels competent. Interestingly enough, the capacity to identify fake news does not seem exactly correlated with one's capacity to demonstrate critical thinking since – despite the reserve of some

[28] The other half is relatively homogeneously spread between 25 and 55 years old.

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respondents with regard to the identification of fake news – an overwhelming majority considers themselves being good at critical thinking. In focus groups, however, older people specified that they might have shared news that seemed fake or misleading especially when they were emotionally challenged by the content.

When it comes to educational opportunities, the majority of older respondents expressed having already trained their digital skills or informed themselves about disinformation. Yet according to their own assessment, older respondents would still benefit from a training.

Interestingly enough, **the topics for digital literacy trainings preferred by older adults are similar to those of younger age groups** (by order of preference in the survey):

- how to trust online information and identify fake news;
- how to react/respond to fake news;
- how to use digitalised services, for example tax paying, banking, online shopping, online public consultation, etc.

The emotional responses that allow the form of the focus group method made it possible to highlight the motivations for older people to increase their digital participation beyond the preferences listed in the survey. Remarks like "*if you're not on Facebook, you're gone*" or "*if you're not on the internet, you're offboard*" allowed to confirm the hypothesis of a feeling of exclusion among adults without sufficient digital skills. Topics such as privacy, site authenticity, etc. stood out in focus groups as desired learning topics.

The reasons that might **hamper the development of their digital skills** seem to vary greatly. One in four older respondents expressed difficulties to develop their digital skills due to the lack of accessible trainings – a proportion similar to the rest of the population. One in five older respondents also listed the absence of adequate training offers and regretted that older persons are not targeted as potential trainees; these two reasons did not appear as salient in the responses of the rest of the population. Among the other reasons brought up by respondents are[29]:

- I **do not struggle** and consider having sufficient digital skills for their needs;
- I **do not have time** or have competing priorities;
- I **lack motivation** searching for trainings or grow digital skills to do everything online;

[29] The full list of translated reasons is available in the separate file with raw survey responses.

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- I find that **training is expensive/costly** (only respondents from Italy).

All in all, little differences seem to stand out from the needs and preferences for digital literacy training between respondents aged 55 and over and the rest of the population thus bearing great potential for digital and media literacy initiatives targeting younger age groups to be exported to the intergenerational context of DIGITOL.

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5. Existing digital literacy trainings and success factors

The present chapter covers existing initiatives to develop one's digital literacy (section 5.1) – including initiatives specifically targeting older adults (section 5.2) – before discussing the success factors to digital literacy trainings that aim to combat fake news (chapter 6).

5.1. Generic initiatives and their transferability potential within DIGITOL

From chapter 4, we learnt that according to professionals, older people struggle to develop their digital skills because of the lack of accessible trainings primarily, because of insufficient training offers and, to a lesser extent because older persons are simply not targeted as potential trainees (see section 4.1). Older people themselves confirm that the lack of accessible trainings is an issue to one fourth of them, along with inadequate training offers and the absence of older people as potential targets for training. However, they also mentioned the lack of time and motivation as additional barriers to older respondents (see section 4.2).

The present section explores what are the **initiatives in the field of digital and media literacy** that have been identified by DIGITOL partners, who they target, and what are the main skills they aim to develop. This section will also assess their transferability potential for the target group of older adults and the intergenerational exchanges that will be conducted in the Digital Academy. Through the DIGITOL survey, 36 initiatives[30] of digital literacy trainings have been identified. We categorise the initiatives identified in DIGITOL depending on the type of trainees they target. The categories are defined as follows:

- W/O: Initiatives targeting trainees other than older adults (n= 13), and

[30] This final number combines results from all five language versions of the DIGITOL survey and takes account of removed duplicates in the initiatives identified by respondents.

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- INCL: Initiatives including older adults as one of the target groups (n= 9);
- ONLY: Initiatives targeting older adults as the only target group (n= 14).

Besides older adults, the identified initiatives are **mainly targeting the general public** (that is the case for n= 10 of the identified initiatives), young adults (n= 7), job seekers (n= 5), children (n= 4), people with a migrant background (n= 3), people with disabilities (n= 2), and teachers (n= 2). Initiatives that target older people only are analysed more in details in section 5.2.

According to the survey results, the identified initiatives – regardless of their target group - mainly aim to develop two types of skills, on the one hand: **Information and Data Literacy** (defined in the survey[31] as: Browsing/searching for, evaluating and managing data, information and digital content), and on the other hand: **Communication and collaboration** (Interacting, sharing, engaging and collaborating through digital technologies, Netiquette, managing digital identity). To a lesser extent, respondents also identified **Problem solving** (Solving technical problems, identifying needs and technological responses, creatively using digital technologies, identifying digital competence gaps) among the skills included in the training initiatives. The vast majority of these initiatives touches upon online media and information as part of the training scope.

Interestingly enough, regardless of the target groups considered for training, most initiatives use **non-formal education**, and **online/distance learning** for their initiatives. A great pool of initiatives also chose the **lifelong-learning approach** while private classes, private education programmes, vocational trainings, and initiatives falling under formal education are only marginally represented in the initiatives identified by DIGITOL.

Several initiatives have been identified during the first months of the DIGITOL project. We shed light on some very active stakeholders in the field and their most outstanding initiatives for the development of digital and media literacy that could serve as an inspiration for the Digital Academy. Below are only a few examples of a field that is constantly developing new content and projects. For an overview of existing media literacy initiatives, the "Check It Out" database of the **"Open Your Eyes" Erasmus+ project**[32] provides an excellent entry point. The database compiles about more than 80 tools and initiatives to learn about online disinformation. The initiatives take various forms, from games to education programme and workshop.

[31] All definitions come from the European Commission Digital Competence Framework 2.0: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework
[32] https://openyoureyes.info/en/database

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The consultation of stakeholders has confirmed that although various initiatives aim at developing the digital literacy of older adults, the trainings aiming to develop one's media literacy often target younger age groups. A quick preview of the "Check It Out" database confirms similar trends with 45 initiatives targeting teenagers, 54 targeting younger adults, 46 targeting adults, but 31 targeting older people. However, exchanges with the stakeholders confirmed that many of the existing initiatives targeting earlier age groups could be used as such with older adults. In some instances, stakeholders have also expressed interest in the DIGITOL project as they are currently reflecting on how to expand/adapt their activities to include older adults.

5.2.1. Immersion games for young people

Among the strategies mentioned to grow young people's media literacy, professionals mentioned the inoculation theory as one of the strategies that could develop older people's digital literacy. The inoculation theory foresees to build up resistance to disinformation by being exposed to weakened versions of it in a "sort of a vaccine against disinformation". As an example, an interviewee mentioned an online game – **the "Bad News Game"**[33] – inviting the players to take on the role of fake news-monger by posting online to increase their number of followers and level of credibility. The players are at risk of suddenly losing it all if they tell obvious lies or disappoint their supporters. Although the game was initially designed for a younger crowd and their educators[34], it could serve as an inspiration for older learners. Similarly, **"Code games"**[35] have been designed for primary school students aged 7 to 10 by the Media Literacy Coalition in Bulgaria. Each lesson develops the children's understanding of different types of media, their content, ethical ways to communication, and what are responsible behaviours online. The lessons are accompanied by explanations, ideas and instructions to the teachers[36].

[33] https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro
[34] The "Bad News Game" website specifies that an info sheet is available to educators; it contains more information about how the game was developed, its scientific background, and how to use it in a classroom setting. The game is an accessible media literacy tool: https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro
[35] Games are accessible on the Envision Play platform with the following codes depending on the grade: 1st grade: 1021 | 2nd: 2021 | 3rd: 3021 | 4th: 4021 on https://editor.nimero.com/play/
[36] Support documentation for teachers and educators is available in the Lessons and Presentations section of the Gramoten.li Resources directory: https://bit.ly/2CUSJi7 on http://gramoten.li/

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5.2.2. Teaching material for educators and family relatives

Many initiatives are intended to educators and teachers, sometimes also family relatives (parents and grand-parents) to accompany the digital education of children. The **"European Safe Online"** initiative[37] aims to build a program to educate parents and educators to become fully aware of the risks and opportunities the new media offer to their children. The national reports of DIGITOL have also identified a great variety of initiatives of that kind:

- In Italy for instance, the **Genitori Connessi** project[38] aims at training teachers in schools and families in institutes from the municipality of Reggio Emilia so that they can support their children in acquiring a conscious and critical digital citizenship. It is worth noting that many of the trainings gathered grandparents rather than parents.
- In Germany, the State Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia has developed a workshop[39] ("**Workshop zur Informationskompetenz im Netz**") dedicated to information literacy on the Internet to support educational institutions in actively taking the qualification of Internet users as a social educational task.
- In Finland, FactBar EDU published a "**Information Literacy Guide**" for educators and students[40] (in Finnish, soon coming in English), tips for home-school students searching for reliable information and a Voter literacy toolbox[41] to prepare for the elections.

The intergenerational approach was preferred by the **"Get Your Fact Straight"** initiative[42] of the European Media Literacy Week. Partners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Spain have developed a training programme for a 15h training course for 14-16-year-old students and their parents and grandparents. The course can be done both in schools, as well as in non-formal educational settings such as youth clubs, libraries, NGOs. The classes are composed of a small group of older people and students where they alternate moments of lesson, practice

[37] https://europeansafeonline.eu/
[38] https://bit.ly/3hOkk3L
[39] https://www.medienkompetenzportal-nrw.de/handlungsfelder/erwachsenenbildung/workshop-zu-informationskompetenz-im-netz.html
[40] https://faktabaari.fi/edu/digital-information-literacy-for-educators-and-students-introduction/
[41] https://faktabaari.fi/assets/FactBar_EDU_Fact-checking_for_educators_and_future_voters_13112018.pdf
[42] https://alldigitalweek.eu/get-facts/

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and work in pairs. Learning and teaching material for media literacy development including the training outline and the methodologies is available on the website of the initiative[43].

5.2.3. Young people as change makers

But younger people are not necessarily passive receivers of the training; many of those initiatives aim to be playful and interactive. In Germany, the **Digital heroes** mentoring programme[44] organises the participation of young people in the 7th-9th grade to coach other young people in media competence, and offer support in the prevention of online bullying. The film competition **Krass gegen Hass**[45], still in Germany, invites young people between 10 and 16 to make videos that deal with the topic of "Respect and tolerance in social networks"; their productions set an example of cohesion and acceptance beyond the problem.

In Austria, Belgium, and Germany for instance, **"Lie Detectors"**[46] deploy journalists and selected media experts in the classroom recruiting them from alumni circles of recognised journalism schools to help children understand how mainstream media selects news and may insert bias to present a picture of reality that is often incomplete. With 90-minute interactive sessions in the classroom, the project aims to turn schoolchildren from 10 to 15 years old into powerful critical thinkers in a world increasingly populated by distorted facts online, empowering them to make informed choices.

The **"Media Literacy for Living Together"** project[47] of COFAC (Portugal) is even going further: in this initiative, younger people are directly engaged as active participants and game changers. The project aims to improve the media literacy skills of young people with a focus on fake news and media representations of body images. It uses video games, animation and active participation of young people to develop their critical understanding of the media. Secondly, the project aims to activate young participants to become agents of change in their communities that would disseminate their new knowledge. A similar process could be applied to a group of older adults in a train-the-trainers approach or to an intergenerational group interested in working towards

[43] https://alldigitalweek.eu/get-facts/resources/
[44] https://www.sicheres-netz-hilft.de/wissen/digitale-helden/
[45] http://krassgegenhass.junetz.de/
[46] https://lie-detectors.org/
[47] https://milt.ulusofona.eu/about/

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the same objective of increased critical thinking within their (common or not) communities like it is the ambition of DIGITOL.

5.2. Initiatives targeting older people

Many similarities have been identified between digital and media literacy training initiatives targeting older adults with those targeting other groups (see section 5.1). A few particularities seem however to stand out from the initiatives specifically targeting older adults, justifying that some adaptations or personalisation is anticipated when designing and delivering digital and media literacy trainings intended to older people.

In terms of **content of the trainings** for instance, initiatives including or targeting specifically older adults tend to cover more systematically skills related to the basic uses of digital devices (often provided by associations or Third Age universities), digital content creation, online safety and problem solving than initiatives intended to other social or age groups. Although the need for media literacy among older people is evident as it is for other age groups, very few initiatives address older adults, with the vast majority of the existing examples focusing on children.

The **chosen approach** to develop older people's digital and media literacy also differs from the initiatives targeting other age and social groups. For obvious reasons, no initiative including or targeting older people takes place through formal education; fewer take place through online/distance learning. However, they more systematically take part in lifelong learning programmes or adopt an intergenerational approach.

The comparison of **success factors** does not seem to diverge between category of initiatives; however, when it comes to **difficulties** hindering the further development of the project, the diversity of trainees, the difficulty to reach out to the target group, and interpersonal problems within the group appear to be more prominent for initiatives targeting only older people.

Some of the initiatives identified in DIGITOL target specifically older adults. As a matter of fact, the "Check It Out" database[48] has collected 31 initiatives targeting older people. In the following section are introduced the most relevant initiatives for the Digital Academy that will be developed by DIGITOL and for whoever is willing to grow the digital and media literacy of older adults in an empowering and intergenerational approach.

[48] https://openyoureyes.info/en/database/list

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5.2.4. Older people guiding older people into the digital world

Some of those initiatives are run by older people themselves. The **"Digi-Guides"** Juhani Pörtfors, 68 years old, and Matti Sarviranta, 70+ for instance, engage the older generation into digital technologies[49]. Through the adult learning organisation of Turku, Finland, they are 10 digital guides to organise weekly support pop-ups and provide digital support and guidance to seniors of their city. During the COVID-19 period, the support group digitalised its activities by engaging with the older people of Turku via Skype.

Similarly, the Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO) has contributed to establish the **Digital Compass[50]**, a network of 75 Internet pilot support locations across Germany where older people can meet and try out digital services for themselves. The German volunteer project **"Senioren-Lernen-Online"[51]** is also organized by senior citizens to give older adults the opportunity to learn using the Internet. The group offers workshops, round tables and individual help as well as online courses. The programme, adapted to the interests of participants and moderators, show older people how they can use new opportunities for internet communication and share their experiences in international projects.

More specifically focused on disinformation, the Danish older persons' organisation **Ældre Sagen** was also sharing tips and tricks with its community of peers on how to spot fake news on Facebook[52]: be critical of news you read on the Internet, check the source, check if other media cover the same news, double-check before sharing, etc. Similarly, the European older people's network AGE Platform Europe – a partner of the DIGITOL project composed both of older people's

[49] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/juhani-portfors-and-matti-sarviranta-community-story-finland
[50] The Digital Compass is a project of the Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO) and Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V. in partnership with the Consumer Initiative with funding from the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection. https://www.digital-kompass.de/
[51] https://senioren-lernen-online.de/
[52] https://www.aeldresagen.dk/viden-og-raadgivning/hverdagsliv/godt-i-gang-med-it/gode-raad/spot-falske-nyheder-paa-facebook

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organisations and providers of services to older people – was alerting on the risk of disinformation during COVID-19[53].

5.2.5. Resources to equip professionals and volunteers close to older people

While many initiatives against disinformation target educators, teachers, and parents, projects could focus on the education of professionals, volunteers, or relatives of older people – especially in situations where older people are not in a position or willing to attend a training by themselves – to grow their understanding of the risks and opportunities of online media so they could share this knowledge with the older people they know.

The initiative of the Forum Seniorenarbeit NRW has chosen a similar approach for its handbook and online workshop on information literacy (**"Zugänge für ältere Menschen"**)[54]: both the handbook and online seminar organised were intended to staff and volunteers from community-oriented organizations, initiatives and associations working with older adults. The two resources provide a first introduction to the topic of enabling digital access for older people. The handout is taking account of the local situations of the senior political actors and different learning and educational formats are mapped for the heterogeneous group of older people.

5.2.6. Intergenerational initiatives to grow older people's digital literacy

Beyond the intergenerational dimensions of projects involving professionals (who are usually younger than the older adults they are in contact with), several initiatives have decided to put the intergenerational contacts at the core of their activities.

[53] https://age-platform.eu/policy-work/news/disinformation-and-covid-19-matter-concern-older-people

[54] https://forum-seniorenarbeit.de/2020/05/digitale-zugaenge-fuer-aeltere-menschen-ermoeglichen-handreichung-veroeffentlicht/ and https://forum-seniorenarbeit.de/events/digitaltag-2020-webinar-zugaenge-zur-digitalisierung-fuer-aeltere-menschen/

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This is the case of **"Simbioza"**[55], a Slovenian initiative that has run several national campaigns recruiting and training volunteers to teach older people the use of computers, smartphones and tablets. Simbioza takes the form of an intense learning programme where older people are trained digital skills to use a device, search on the Internet, send emails, participate in social networks, and increase their understanding of data protection. Schools offer free computer classrooms for workshops with older people, which are carried out by volunteer students, according to the Symbiosis of curricula and under the watchful eye of the mentor-coordinator.

A similar initiative is conducted in Italy under the name **Nonni su Internet**[56]. Carried out by the Fondazione Mondo Digitale, the digital literacy project foresees to increase the social and digital inclusion of young people, older people and migrants. Coordinated by a teacher experienced in computer technologies, each pupil acts as a trainer for every two seniors in 15 weekly sessions of 2 hours (30 hours in total). The courses take place in schools of every grade and the participants are older people from the areas (grandparents of the students or enrolled in the Social Centres for older people or similar associations). The scope of the initiative focuses on basic skills to power on a digital device to browsing the Internet, use e-mails and social networks.

In Greece, the "**Knowledge Volunteers**" project[57] had a similar spirit to the above initiatives with the older people's organisation 50plus Hellas organising the training of older adults thanks to the recruitment of young volunteers.

5.2.7. Trainings for older people including both digital and media literacy

Although the majority of trainings and initiatives targeting older adults seem to first focus on digital literacy to access and use the Internet rather than on media literacy (see many of the initiatives targeting older people identified in the DIGITOL national reports: those are often delivered by Third Age universities or dedicated associations), several projects have taken account of the risks of providing future Internet users with the skills to find information without being able to have a critical understanding of it.

[55] https://www.simbioza.eu/sl/2019/sodeluj
[56] https://www.mondodigitale.org/it/cosa-facciamo/aree-intervento/invecchiamento-attivo/nonni-su-internet
[57] https://youtu.be/Aj9P0NwSb4U

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In Bulgaria, the "**Grand Experts"** project[58] 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. The project is still ongoing; all final learning materials will be published on a freely accessible platform to be accessible online for free.

In Estonia, the digital skills training **"E-Citizen"**[59] is a programme aiming to grow both digital and media literacy. Its primary objective is to significantly increase the number of computer and Internet users across the country, especially older people. The programme pays special attention to the State portal Eesti.ee and the services that the state offers its citizens for paperless administration with a view to increasing the access of older people to digitalised public services. On the other hand, e-safety is also a core part as the training equips trainees to critically review the information found on the Internet and review what they post online.

Along the same lines, the Finnish **"IkäihMe"** project[60] produces and pilots a research-based digital study unit for media education for older people, which can be utilized not only by universities but also by educational institutions and adult education organizations. Interestingly enough, the project is introduced as putting the focus on the potential brought by our digital societies rather than on a flawed "*view of older people as semi-helpless citizens struggling with information society services or at risk of digital exclusion*". The project is still in its early days at the time of writing the present report but both the University of Lapland and the University of Helsinki have already released resourceful publications[61] among which a systematic review on "Promoting media literacy among older people" (Rasi et al., 2020) and an overview of the stakeholders' perspective on "Media education for older people" (Rivinen, 2020).

[58] http://grandexperts-project.odl.org
[59] https://www.bcskoolitus.ee/projekt/ekodanik/
[60] https://www.ulapland.fi/FI/Kotisivut/IkaihMe-hanke
[61] https://lacris.ulapland.fi/fi/projects/developing-teacher-education-of-adult-educators--targeting-older-peoples-media-education%28e32ac09e-56bc-48d6-a81e-6751ceed04b5%29.html

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6. Key factors for a successful digital literacy training

Thanks to conversations with stakeholders active in the sector and older people themselves through focus groups and surveys, the DIGITOL project came up with a number of key factors to ensure the initiative is fit for the expectations and needs of the group(s) it targets.

6.1. Quality, accessibility and adequacy of the training programme come first

The analysis of the DIGITOL survey responses clearly showed that success factors are similar to all initiatives regardless of their target audience. The majority of the initiatives identified were considered successful primarily because of:

- **the quality and relevance of the training programme** (20 out of 36 initiatives identified),
- **the knowledge of the trainers and support to sustain the trainees' motivation** (13 cases),
- **the social skills of the trainers** (11).

Similar feedback was received during the stakeholders' interviews and in the analysis of the preferences of individual respondents to the survey. On the programme quality, the interviewed professionals stressed that the training should be well-designed and grounded in research and experts' opinions in order to address needs and concerns of different learners and stakeholders.

Individual respondents also stressed the importance of having a programme that meets the preferences of the trainees: they were 14% to spontaneously (open-ended responses) respond that the training should be tailored to the profile of participants and take account of their needs and existing competences, using different levels of training, individualised approaches where need be, and well targeted audiences to ensure trainees' satisfaction; they were also 8% to suggest that the quality of the training programme – to have a clear, comprehensive and simple programme – was of key importance for the success of the initiative. This call for personalisation

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and tailored trainings to the topics of interest and daily needs of the trainees came out from all national investigations as crucial to sustain participants' motivation.

Totally absent from the responses of professionals and yet the primary success factor mentioned by individual respondents is the accessibility of the initiative. Be it in terms of complexity of the content (e.g. simple vocabulary), of format of the training (e.g. short sessions), or in terms of availability of the training material, they were more than one in five individual respondents to consider accessibility as a key dimension for the success of digital and media literacy trainings. For instance, it came out in several national reports that it is best when participants use their own tablets or telephones during training, as they tend to get confused with different devices. Finally, several national reports recalled the importance of practice. Encouraging the one-to-one and/or small groups practice, ideally when the group is relatively homogeneous in terms of digital literacy, can provide experimental learning and contribute to participants' sensitization to the risks or difficulties they might encounter in their own practice and use of the digital world.

The analysis of the barriers hindering the development of existing trainings can also help anticipate the conditions for future successes. Among the initiatives listed in the DIGITOL survey, the main difficulty identified by professional respondents seem to primarily be the lack of funding (13 initiatives out of 36) regardless of who they are targeting as trainees. In the case of initiatives targeting older persons only though, **respondents identified as barriers to the success of the initiative the diversity of potential trainees, the difficulty to reach out to the target group, and interpersonal problems within the group**. From the perspective of individual respondents, it was rather the affordability of trainings that was mentioned a few times, especially in Italy.

6.2. Appealing communication and social skills should not be neglected

Both interviewed professionals and individual respondents in the survey underlined the importance of good communication at global and interpersonal level.

At a strategic level, a clear and comprehensive communications plan will be critical for the promotion of the training programme and to recruit participants. Given the difficulty to reach out

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to the older trainees that came out from the DIGITOL survey, such a communication plan would be key to devise strategies in order to recruit interested older people. Among the suggestions received from the interviewed professionals was the idea to go through young people's own families as a starting point (in order to get a couple of old learners on board if there is a pre-existing relationship, e.g. grandchildren-grandparents); this might be particularly effective in countries where extended families tend to live together or close by. Individual respondents rather emphasized the importance of using attractive, creative and clear communication materials that would take away the fear or misconception about media and digital environments. One also stressed that communications should avoid stigmatising representations of older people.

At interpersonal level, professional respondents of the survey brought forward the need for good social skills for trainers. Trainers must be familiar with factors that impact on engagement and participation and interaction between trainers and trainees should be built on the principle of mutual respect. Interviewed professionals echoed that finding from the DIGITOL national reports when recommending to provide continued instructor training, develop a culture of collaboration between institutions, instructors and families, and secure long-term funding through longer-term policy support: "*There should also be common understanding and respect for each generation's unique experiences through open dialogue. The facilitators can help to ensure this by providing guidance/training to understand the perspective of the other, and also provide a safe and cohesive environment to do so*" as one interviewee put it. The trainer's quality was also reflected in the individual responses where survey respondents underlined the importance of a fun and friendly atmosphere with "*adequate and engaging tutors*" that would be able to give "a*ttention to the needs of those being trained*".

An appealing and collaborative communication could be met through the exploration of artworks as a way to engage learners regardless of their educational level, and enhance participation; as detailed in the Greek national report, it helps thinking 'outside the box', developing new ways of thinking and helps getting around stereotypes. The method is easily applied by any trainer using any type of art (fine arts, films, theatre, literature, music). Acceptance, solidarity, and cooperation are only a few themes for discussion, as well as issues such as populism, homophobia, ageism and ethics. It requires a work of art (best chosen by the group) and a question that the group wants

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to elaborate (disorientating dilemma). An example can be found in the material developed for the European project MATURE - Making Adult Teaching Useful, Relevant and Engaging[62].

6.3. Collaboration to sustain motivation in an intergenerational project

Good communication at interpersonal level is closely related to other key success factors identified by both individual respondents and professional interviewees: interactivity, collaboration, and the key values of interdependence and reciprocity – especially in an intergenerational project. The motivation of both young and older participants will only be sustained if both sides can benefit from the programme. **Factors most crucial to the success of an intergenerational approach will be to ensure that both parties' views are equally represented and listened to. In this way, this environment needs to be conducive to compromise.**

According to the interviewed professionals, one of the key motivating factors for young people to take part in such a training will be the inclusion of their ideas into the design of the training sessions. While young people usually have the digital experience and skills, hence they are in a unique position to share their know-how, the training should not disregard the competences of other (older) participants. Both generations will need to get to know each other, be recognised in their respective strengths and take into account the differences in their knowledge and life experiences in their conversations. As a matter of fact, an expert warned about the risk of young people taking their digital skills for granted while the learning processes at an older age or when one has been far less regularly exposed to the digital world might be "uncharted territory" for them. **Once again, both groups' ownership and participation in all phases of the project are crucial to slowly grow a mutual understanding between age groups.**

The "power struggles" and intergenerational dynamics should not be underestimated, as experts flagged. The language used by young or older people might be unknown to the other group; none should feel excluded or lose self-confidence due to language/vocabulary barriers. Instead, professionals recommend to help participants (both trainers and trainees) to relate at an

[62] https://www.50plus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/MATURE-F2F-training-EN-final1.pdf

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emotional level by extracting examples and positive experiences from their respective living and family environments ("What do you wish for your own grandparents so that they can handle digital media more? What do you think they need for this to work and what advantages would that have for your grandparents?"). **An approach through an emotional and tangible lens might also help all participants to embed their digital learning into tangible daily life contexts.**

As one interviewee concluded, most promising/successful methods for digital and media literacy training are those which provide a clear framework for the success actors (programme quality, partnerships, funding, addressing needs and concerns of learners, clear and comprehensive communication) and yet offers flexibility and contextualization to each partner's local context.

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7. Conclusions and insights for the DIGITOL Academy

The increasing complexity of disinformation and growing digitalisation of our communications and services poses important challenges – if not threats – to our societies and democracies. The present report provides a context analysis about the needs and preferences of older adults for digital and media literacy trainings. The objective of this report was to deepen the understanding of older people's needs and interest for training, to identify promising initiatives using digital and media literacy trainings to combat disinformation, and to provide practical recommendations for the elaboration of the DIGITOL Digital Social Academy, an intergenerational training initiative for younger and older generations to address the challenge of disinformation together.

The hybrid methodology chosen for data collection comprises an online survey in five languages (Bulgarian, English, German, Greek, and Italian), interviews and focus groups with experts in the field of digital and media literacy as well as with older adults. The present report combines and complements four national reports covering the same scope for Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Italy. These reports are available online on the DIGITOL website (www.digitol.eu).

The findings from the DIGITOL data collection reaffirm the need to improve digital literacy and media literacy of the whole society as a way to ensure more effective social inclusion. Consistently with various research works on digital divides, the DIGITOL findings confirm that one's digital skills and need for training depend on socio-economic factors and one's living environment rather than age. People with low educational attainment, experiencing poverty, living with a disability, people with a migrant background, or those more isolated (e.g. because they live in rural areas, because they do not have children or grandchildren, because they are discriminated, etc.) are less likely to be digitally literate.

Many older people find themselves in one or several of the above situations, thus explaining that older people are more likely to face digital exclusion. However, the heterogeneity of older people, in particular whether they are still in working age and/or their field of activity, is reflected in the very varied opportunities to grow digital skills and digital literacy levels.

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On many aspects, the DIGITOL findings demonstrate a common interest across age groups for more digital proficiency and a shared curiosity to be more informed and capable of tackling disinformation. Older respondents are only slightly more willing to become more proficient users than younger respondents. Regardless of age, the majority of respondents agreed that if equipped with the adequate skills, they could benefit from the opportunities offered by our digitalised societies. When asked about what content should be included in trainings for older adults, the DIGITOL data showed that both experts and older people prioritised three categories:

- **Using the Internet to grow older people's participation**: e.g. to help older people become more proficient users of social media and communication apps, to ensure older people have a say in online debates and consultations, to contribute to fighting isolation, etc.
- **Making the most of digitalised services**: e.g. to ensure older people can manage their assets (digital banks), interact with their administration (pay online taxes or ask for social benefits), book medical appointments or receive digital prescriptions, etc.
- **Growing knowledge for a safe and responsible digital participation**: e.g. how to trust online information, how to respond to fake news, how to identify and avoid online scams, training on how to distinguish fake news from reliable information ("crap detection"), etc.

While interested in learning more about digital literacy and fake news, the older respondents identified important aspects that hampered the development of their digital skills. These included, the lack of accessible training (as identified by all respondents), absence of adequate training offers and lack of initiatives targeted to older persons. Moreover, they reported a lack of motivation/time to engage with the digital world and found training too expensive.

At the same time, the results underline that even though a plethora of initiatives for digital and media literacy exist, the ones addressing disinformation often focus on the younger generations. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of digital and media literacy initiatives identified in DIGITOL was found to touch upon online media and information as part of the training scope. Initiatives including media literacy adopt different strategies such as immersion games to directly engage with young people or empowering programmes inviting younger people to become the change makers in situations of cyber bullying, or disinformation. Other programmes target young people indirectly by producing teaching materials to support educators and family relatives in the digital education of young people.

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The analysis of those initiatives showed several openings for transferability to older age groups, e.g. by using interactive methods to empower older people to become change makers in their community, or by indirectly training professionals and relatives in contact with older people. Some of the initiatives identified by DIGITOL already explore those approaches. These include initiatives run by older people, or older people's associations, the provision of resources to equip professionals with the tools and materials to engage older people, and intergenerational initiatives that rely on the exchange of knowledge between the young and the old.

For the vast majority of the initiatives inclusive of older people however, the focus remains on digital skills to use devices and the Internet; very few address how to understand and react to online content. These initiatives were often delivered by Third Age universities or associations using peer-to-peer teaching and/or intergenerational approaches. Most initiatives inclusive of older people tend to cover more systematically skills related to the basic uses of digital devices, digital content creation, online safety and problem solving than initiatives intended to other social or age groups. These findings seem consistent with the systematic review by Rasi et al. (2020).

The DIGITOL data provides some pointers to make existing initiatives accessible to older adults and further develop media literacy trainings to all age groups. Building on the successes of the few existing initiatives of training including older people as well as other training offers intended to younger age groups, the consultation of experts and older people allowed the compilation of a series of important factors for designing a successful intergenerational media literacy training:

- **quality and adequacy of the training programme** with the practical needs of trainees,
- **accessibility** both of the content and format/logistics of trainings,
- **appealing and tailored communication** to reach out to the target trainees,
- **excellent social skills** of the trainers especially in interpersonal relationships, and
- **participatory and collaborative atmosphere** ensuring mutual respect and ownership by participants from all age groups (especially for intergenerational programmes).

What concerns the intergenerational dimension of the training programme, the most crucial factor of success will be to ensure that both parties' views are equally represented and listened to. Thus it is important to ensure that the learning environment is to be conducive to compromise. Additionally, both groups' ownership and participation in all phases of the project are crucial to slowly grow a mutual understanding between age groups while an approach through an

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emotional and tangible lens ensures that all participants to embed their digital learning into their individual daily life contexts.

The research results underline that the DIGITOL project fills a gap that is evident from the existing initiatives as well as from the preferences of older adults. By focusing on the development of media literacy training, the DIGITOL project contributes to provide a much needed opportunity for both older adults and younger people alike to enhance their data and media literacy.

The design of the training programme – **the future "Digital Social Academy" – will ideally take into account the key success factors that were identified in this report to create a learning environment that is conducive to mutual respect and allows the participants not only to participate but to take ownership of their learning process. This will require a strong and relevant learning programme, designed with the participation of both young and older people to respond to the individual needs of both trainers and trainees.**

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Annexes

Annex 1: Analytics from the survey

Language version	Date of creation	Number of total responses
English (EN)	March 20, 2020	52
Bulgarian (BG)	March 24, 2020	70
German (DE)	March 22, 2020	59
Greek (EL)	March 24, 2020	55
Italian (IT)	March 23, 2020	120

It is possible to access the survey results for each language version via the links below:

- EN - https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-9QX2KTBG7/
- BG - https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-KVHRXFBG7/
- DE - https://de.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-R692TFBG7/
- EL - https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-6R66FFBG7/
- IT - https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-MK37NFBG7/

The demographics for each survey in national languages are available in the national reports for the country in question (Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy). The survey in English language was answered by respondents from various countries and was not covered by a national report. Its responses were included into an aggregate analysis of all survey responses. The demographics for the survey in English language and the information regarding the characteristics of the survey respondents are presented in Annex 1 of the separate file entitled “Statistical data for the context analysis report”.

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Annex 2: List of stakeholders interviewed

Organisation	Language	Website	Date
EU Disinfo Lab	English	www.disinfo.eu	18/6/2020
EAVI – Media Literacy For Citizenship	English	eavi.eu	15/7/2020
LifeLong Learning Platform	English	lllplatform.eu	07/7/2020
Timeheroes	Bulgarian	https://timeheroes.org/bg/	N/A
Third age University	Bulgarian	https://nbu3age.org/	N/A
Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation (ICSS)	Bulgarian	https://www.icss-bg.org/?lang=en	N/A
Tulip foundation	Bulgarian	https://www.tulipfoundation.net/bg/index/	N/A
Knowledge Association Lovech	Bulgarian	http://znanielovech.org/	N/A
Representatives of five relevant local organisations[63]	German	N/A	May 2020
Junior Achievement Greece	Greek	www.senja.gr	14/5/20
Curing The Limbo	Greek	www.curingthelimbo.gr	15/5/20
50plusHellas	Greek	www.50plus.gr	19/5/20 16/5/20 15/5/20
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Department of Communication and Mass Media	Greek	www.en.uoa.gr	30/6/20
SMARTNATION	Italian	www.smartnation.it	5/5/2020
AUSER Monza e Brianza	Italian	www.ausermonzabrianza.it	6/5/2020
OPEN GROUP	Italian	www.opengroup.eu	13/5/2020
ANTEAS Milano	Italian	www.anteasmilano.org	22/5/2020
Fondazione Mondo Digitale	Italian	www.mondodigitale.org	22/5/2020

[63] In order to guarantee the anonymity of the participants, the names and the organisations are only used for evaluation purposes and are not included in the report

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Annex 3: List of stakeholders that participated in focus groups

Organisations in Bulgaria	Location	Website
KUTU Ltd	Sofia	https://www.linkedin.com/company/kutu-ltd./
ESN Bulgaria	Sofia	https://esnbg.org/
Заедно в час	Sofia	https://zaednovchas.bg/
Knowledge Association Lovech	Lovech	http://znanielovech.org/
Knowledge Association Smolyan	Smolyan	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	https://www.icss-bg.org/?lang=en
Tulip Foundation	Sofia	https://www.tulipfoundation.net/bg/index/

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Organisations in Germany	Location	Website
RIAC Project Consultant	N/A	www.riac-project.eu/
VHS Dietzenbach	Dietzenbach	https://www.vhs-dietzenbach.de/
Jugendamt Stadt Offenbach, Koordinierungsstelle besondere Kooperationsprojekte Jugendhilfe Schule	Offenbach am Mai	http://krassgegenhass.junetz.de/krass-gegen-hass-2020/
Kreis Offenbach – Fachdienst Volkshochschule/Weiterbildung	Dietzenbach	https://www.kreis-offenbach.de/Themen/Bildung-Schule/Kommunales-Bildungsmanagement
Digitale Helden	Frankfurt am Main	https://digitale-helden.de/
ASB Mittelhessen, Projekt EVA	Offenbach am Main	https://www.asb-mittelhessen.de/unsere-leistungen/angebote-fuer-aeltere-menschen/senioren-asina
Pro Arbeit – Kreis Offenbach – (AöR), Abteilung Jobcoaching	Dietzenbach	https://www.proarbeit-kreis-of.de/
BAGSO	Berlin	https://www.bagso.de/
Blickwechsel e.V. - Verein für Medien- und Kulturpädagogik	Göttingen	www.blickwechsel.org
Suchthilfe Zentrum Wildhof	Offenbach am Main	https://www.shz-wildhof.de/
Infocafe Neu Isenburg	Neu-Isenburg	http://infocafe.org/
Pro Arbeit – Kreis Offenbach – (AöR), Projektstelle RoOF	Dietzenbach	https://www.roof-kreis-offenbach.de/
INBAS Institut für berufliche Bildung, Arbeitsmarkt- und Sozialpolitik GmbH	Offenbach am Main	https://www.inbas.com/ueber-uns.html
VHS Dietzenbach	Dietzenbach	https://www.vhs-dietzenbach.de/
Stadt Neu-Isenburg, Projekt „Alt hilft Jung am PC“	Neu-Isenburg	https://neu-isenburg.de/Pressemitteilung Projekt Jung hilf Alt
Universität des dritten Lebensalters, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main	Frankfurt am Main	https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/42584075/home

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Organisations in Greece	Location	Website
50 Plus Hellas: The focus groups were organized with older adults recruited through 50plus Hellas network, as agreed within the digital consortium, with 21 seniors and 2 trainers participating in total. Due to data privacy their names are not listed here.	Greece	www.50plus.gr

Organisations in Italy	Location	Website
50&Più- Sistema associativo e di servizi	Roma	www.50epiu.it
Accademia Civica Digitale (Lo Sbuffo)	Milano	www.accademiacivicadigitale.org
Age Platform Italia	Roma	www.age-platform.eu
Anziani e non solo Coop. Soc.	Carpi (MO)	www.anzianienonsolo.it
Auser Monza e Brianza	Monza	ausermonzabrianza.it
BUTAC blog	Bologna	www.butac.it
Cittadinanza Digitale blog	Barletta-Andria - Trani	www.cittadinanzadigitale.eu
COGESS coop.soc.	Milano	www.cogess.it
CONSORZIO COMUNITA' BRIANZA soc.coop. – impresa sociale	Monza	www.comunitabrianza.it
DEMOSTENE Centro Studi per la promozione dello Sviluppo Umano	Brindisi	www.demostenecentrostudi.org
FONDAZIONE MONDO DIGITALE	Roma	www.mondodigitale.org
IL CITTADINO MB newspaper	Monza	www.ilcittadinomb.it
INRCA	Ancona	www.inrca.it
IULM University	Milano	www.iulm.it
LUISS Data Lab	Roma	www.datalab.luiss.it
SMARTNATION	Monza	www. smartnation.it
SOCIOSFERA coop.soc.	Seregno (MB)	www.sociosfera.it
SPAZIO GIOVANI coop.soc.	Lissone (MB)	www.spaziogiovani.it
Spazio Ireos soc.coop.	Milano	www.spazioireos.com
TALENT startup	Osimo (AN)	www.talenteducation.it
UNIVERSITA' DI PADOVA	Padova	www.unipd.it
UNIVERSITA' DI TORINO	Torino	www.unito.it

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UNIVERSITA' DI URBINO	Urbino	www.uniurb.it
UNIVERSITA' MILANO BICOCCA	Milano	www.unimib.it

Annex 4: Analytics from the focus groups

Date	Number of participants	Gender Balance % F | % M	Type of Participant Organisations
Bulgaria			
19/05/2020	10	65% F 35% M	KUTU Ltd, ESN Bulgaria, Заедно в час (teachers network), volunteers, trainers and people 55+
29/05/2020	12	100% F	Knowledge Association Smolyan, Institute for Community-based Social Services Foundation, Digital Academy Ltd., Knowledge Association Lovech, Tulip Foundation, Alternativi International

Date	Number of participants	Gender Balance % F | % M	Type of Participant Organisations
Germany			
04.06.2020	9	44% F 56% M	-Public administration (sectors youth work, jobcoaching, education) -NGOs (area of adult education) -Charity associations -Private education providers
05.06.2020	11	45% F 55% M	-NGOs (area of media education) -Public administration (Areas youth and social work) -Public educational institutions -Charity associations

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			-Private education providers and research institutes -Public Research Institutes -Public policy organisations

Greece			
21/5/2020	9	80% F 20% M	-Individuales
26/5/2020	14	N/A	-Individuales -Trainers

Italy			
14.05.2020	12	41,6% F 58,3% M	-Non-profit organizations -Research centres (universities, data lab, startup, ...) -Newspaper
21.05.2020	14	28,5% F 71,4% M	-Non-profit organizations - Research centres - Blog

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