

Evidence Digests present information on Digital Inclusion trends and outcomes in an easily digestible form. They act as a guide to conversations between those delivering Digital Inclusion projects and those who wish to learn from them where both can share in an understanding of what the evidence tells us, why and how it should be measured.

In this issue, we explore evidence of older people's digital inclusion.

## Making sense of the evidence about older people's digital inclusion: what matters and to whom?

# MEDICI

Mapping Digital Inclusion

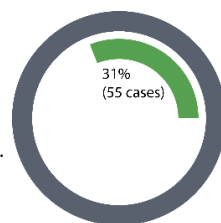
### Context

*'In 2017, 18% or almost one in every five older EU citizens aged 65 or older was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. While social exclusion among people aged 65 or older tends to be lower in comparison to the total population, in some countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta the opposite is the case. Among the older population, it is generally those aged 75 years or older who are most affected.'*<sup>1</sup>

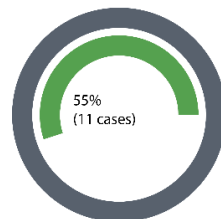
Social isolation among older people is not new. It has been well documented across many European countries and the current growth is monitored. However, the extent of social isolation may be greater than we know as a result not reaching those most difficult to identify and in the wake of the often-enforced isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic. Research suggests that digital inclusion through the use of the internet has a positive impact on older people's wellbeing and the benefits 'may enhance social relations and social capital, and thus contribute to higher subjective wellbeing' but may also 'crowd out actual face-to-face interactions, which would decrease wellbeing.'<sup>2</sup>

To date, a large proportion of digital inclusion projects have targeted older people: almost one in three projects in the MEDICI catalogue. Looking at the overall evidence base for these projects, nearly a quarter (20%) have the highest level of evidence of effectiveness ([Cluster C](#)). This means **that over half of the best evidenced projects target older people**. Clearly, evaluating digital projects with older people has been a priority for the sector so far.

Interestingly, of these 11 well-evidenced interventions, the majority are across Eastern Europe, with just four others across Belgium, Germany and Scandinavia (and none in the UK despite so many projects being based there). Four of these high evidence projects are in the Baltic states alone. This contrasts to the other well-evidenced interventions, which are mostly in Western and Central Europe. This implies that there are **useful, replicable practices** that could be taken from Eastern Europe to help older people in Western Europe (which has a growing ageing population). You can visit [here](#) for an interactive version of the map below.



Proportion of interventions addressing older people



Proportion of Cluster C interventions which address older people

### Defining evidence

Evidence is a broad term that includes different types of knowledge. While there are different views and hierarchies of knowledge around this, the MEDICI project sees this in two ways. **First**, we promote high quality evidence which distinguishes between projects which are **innovative** but not evidenced; **effective** in that there is evidence that the project made a difference; and **replicable** where projects can say with confidence that they worked, in context and more than once. We need evidence to help make decisions about how best to improve digital inclusion. **Second**, MEDICI wants to share the lived experience of people who set up and deliver projects as well as those who take part in them. In these Digests, project stories are shared and readers' views and reviews are encouraged!

<sup>1</sup> Zolyomi, E. (2019) Strategies for supporting social inclusion at older age European Commission

<sup>2</sup> Lelkes, O. (2013) Happier and less isolated: internet use in old age Journal of Poverty and Social Justice February

# Digital Inclusion: Evidence Digests

Location of Medici best evidenced interventions



**Connect, Latvia!** Even though Latvia is among the world's top countries for high broadband penetration, fast internet connection speed and 70% of citizens are Internet users, one particular group does not have access to modern technologies. **Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Latvians aged 55+ have no computer literacy skills.** Latvia is in one of the fastest ageing regions of Europe. It is anticipated that by 2030 the number of citizens in the 15-64 age group will decline by 10%, while the number of citizens over 64 will increase by 41,000 or about 11% (source: Latvia Ministry of Welfare, August, 2012). Latvia has the goal of gradually raising the retirement age to 65 which is why skill development activities, encouraging people to stay in the job market, are critical.

**Connect, Latvia!** is a project of free computer education for seniors (50+), conducted for the fifth year by Lattelecom, the largest electronic services provider in Latvia. The goal of **Connect, Latvia!** is to minimise the digital divide in society and prevent the social exclusion of seniors aged over 50 by promoting computer and digital skills. It is the only project of this scale in Latvia carried out by a private sector company, offering free computer training to one of the most vulnerable groups in society: older people. **But what is the most effective way of training for such a large number of seniors, who are located all over Latvia?** Lattelecom created a training scheme involving volunteer teachers who work at local schools, digital centres, libraries and other institutions with computer classes. Teachers undergo a training course designed by Lattelecom, so that they can in turn teach the program to seniors. Lattelecom have invested €100,000 to date.

**The Connect, Latvia! poll** shows that 81% confirmed that their quality of life has improved and that they feel like a part of modern society; 99% positively rated teacher professionalism and responsiveness; 90% evaluate the classes as useful; and 85% would like to continue to develop the skills gained even further.

Good news stories from the digital world: these stories show what can be done and what makes a difference to older people. There are more in the MEDICI catalogue for readers to browse.

**It-guide®** is a project that has been in progress for three years in the city of Orebro, Sweden. Young immigrants, who have been in their new country for one to three years, help senior citizens with the Internet and everything there is to know about computers and mobile telephones. This summer there are 15 It-guides working at 7 different locations in Orebro where old people live or meet. This year they also have it-guides in the nearby cities of Hallsberg and Eskilstuna. The project aims to expand in Sweden and internationally. These it-guides are paid and the service is free for older people to learn from the it-guides. The project's impact includes for immigrants where they have gained confidence and inspiration to learn the Swedish language; for young people who have gained knowledge about Sweden's past and present and for senior citizens who feel like participants in the digital world, and more included in society. All the project beneficiaries identified the positive and immediate effects of the project in their lives.

Find out more:  
<https://digitalinclusion.eu/>