

Digital Stories Podcast: Episode #1

R: Welcome to "Digital Stories". I'm Rachel Hastings-Caplan.

D: And I'm David Drabble. We both work at the Tavistock Institute in the UK and are working together as part of a project funded by the European Parliament, Medici.

R: That's right! And this is a podcast provided by the Medici Knowledge Community. You may already be familiar with Medici, but just to recap, Medici is an online catalogue of interventions, of projects that tackle digital exclusion in Europe. So Medici lists various good practices in this area and maps out where they are located across Europe.

D: Yep, Medici's a big old map of all the best practices for digital inclusion and a place for people to discover more - we have lots of resources up there so please go to digitalinclusion.eu to find out more.

R: Each month on the podcast we're gonna look at a target group of excluded people. Then we're speaking to some fantastic practitioners who have worked to help their communities to become more digitally included.

D: For this first week, we'll just introduce you to some of the key concepts we'll be exploring and explain why Digital Inclusion is so important.

R: Before we look at Digital Inclusion, maybe we should look at Digital Exclusion first. I'm going to put you on the spot, Dave - how would you describe digital exclusion? ...Come on Dave.

D: Har har I mean, it's tricky to define but essentially digital exclusion refers to the idea that there are certain people who are not able to fully participate in the digital economy. There are many reasons for this, but they include things like not being able to access digital services, not having the necessary skills or not being able to afford devices or data. How was that?

R: A textbook definition, well done! I guess what you're saying with that definition is certain groups have been identified as being more at risk of digital exclusion than others.

D: The Medici project has decided to focus on five groups: people with disabilities, elderly people, vulnerable young people, migrants and unemployed people. And these groups are probably the most vulnerable to digital exclusion.

R: So on the other hand, Digital Inclusion is about the extent to which citizens are able to use digital services and devices. There are a lot of pathways to digital inclusion, but most of the paths are trying to remove barriers that currently prevent some people from participating online, like access, lack of confidence or lack of skills.

D: And there are a lot of great projects out there that are supporting digital inclusion. We have examples of a digital mentoring project in Sweden for instance, that is run by recent migrants to support their language development and social networks whilst helping older people to engage in the digital world for the first time.

R: So, why are we doing this podcast?

D: I hope this podcast will be a useful way for you to understand better how projects and interventions can help people who are on the fringes of the digital economy through telling

stories of some of the most exciting and impactful projects being run in Europe right now. The idea we've had for this podcast is to help people across the continent to understand why digital inclusion matters to people within these target groups.

R: Yeah, exactly. Also digital inclusion is a wide field and a hard one to get a grip on. It's an important topic too, especially as we go into the future. I think we've seen just how important it is during the various lockdowns across Europe: people who are digitally excluded have found it harder to work from home, access school resources, keep in touch with friends and family, order food online or keep up with the news. I think you can see the relation between digital and social exclusion really clearly, because the people who couldn't use these online services were usually the people who are already vulnerable, either in terms of health, economics and social networks.

D: All the information you need about projects that help address these issues is in the Medici catalogue, but we wanted to delve deeper in this podcast and draw out the stories behind the interventions by speaking to the people involved.

R: We hope it'll be helpful for anyone in the Medici knowledge community, whether they're setting up their first digital inclusion intervention or are experienced practitioners who are just interested in what others have achieved.

D: If you have any feedback or suggestions for areas that you'd like us to cover in the podcasts, please let us know in the Knowledge Community forum post set up for this purpose. We have provided a link in the description of this episode so please check that out.

R: Thank you for listening and we look forward to exploring these issues more in the upcoming Digital Stories podcast episodes. The next one will be on the digital inclusion of young people and will be released at the end of July so keep on refreshing the website and we'll see you soon!

D: Bye!