DIGITALIATORS - Digital upskilling for senior citizens, focused on their everyday necessary online transactions, especially after the pandemic

Project no. № 2022-1-BG01-KA220-ADU-000085900

DESK RESEARCH - Greece

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Research Digital Skills for Seniors

In the 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) from the European Commission, Greece ranks 25th out of 27 EU Members. The DESI is a tool to report the progress made by the European countries in key digital policy areas. As seen with Greece's score, the digitalization in Europe is uneven. However, according to the DESI 2022 report, 'overall Greece progressed well in recent years comparatively with other EU Member States signaling that Greece is catching up.'[1]

As more and more government services are becoming digital, the right to equal inclusion in the digital world grows, affecting everyone. Seniors can be considered as the group of people aged of at least 55 years old and above. Helping older people with digitalization provides them with the basic competences needed to meet the demand of the digitalized world we live in.

According to Dr Olympia Kaminioti in the *Digital inclusion and Human Capital in Greece* paper of the Foundation Friedrich Ebert 'there is lower acceptance of technology among older individuals (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000), while stress, fear and even lack of self-esteem when it comes to learning new things are seen in older people (Jimoyiannis & Gravani, 2011).'[2]

According to the Institute of statistics 'Statista' the elderly population in Greece (65+) represents 22.6% of the population. What are the Greek Government /European Union/ organizations / putting in place to facilitate the inclusion of seniors in the Digital World in Greece ?

I/ Analysis in Greece of the level of ICT use among the elderly

An ICT is short for Information and Communications Technology. The website TECHTARGET defines it as 'all devices, networking components, applications and systems that, combined, allow people

[1] Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 Greece, European Commission, file:///C:/Users/IDEC/Downloads/DESI_2022__Greece__eng_7EcEwBAkTAY87J3gXcPEWHeMR4_88706.pdf

[2] C. Paidousi, A. Efstratoglou, November 2020, DIGITAL INCLUSION AND HUMAN CAPITAL IN GREECE, FES "Education & Employment" Working Group of Experts, PART ONE: Digital Skills and Social Inclusion of Human Capital, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/athen/16897.pdf

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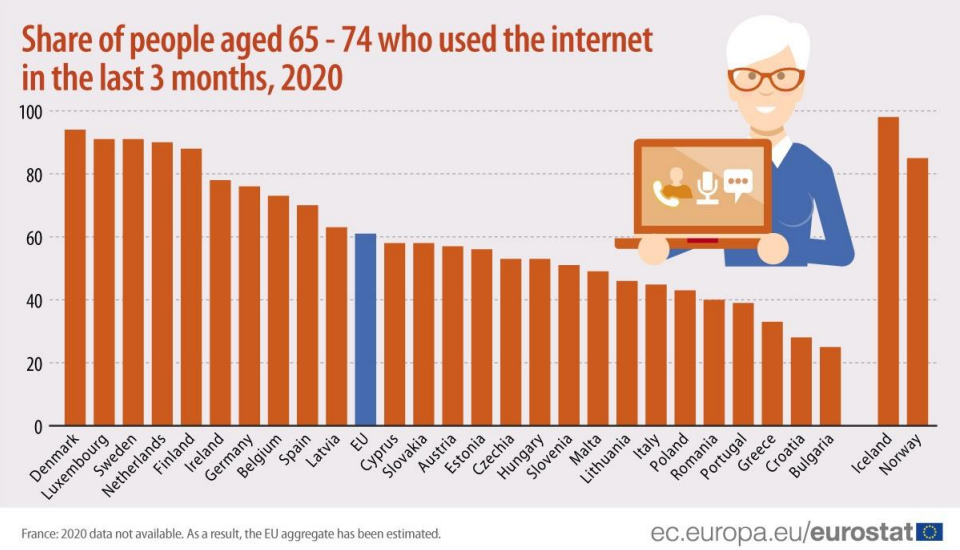
and organizations to interact in the digital world. It is leveraged for economic, societal and interpersonal transactions and interactions.'[3]

Eurostat issued a survey with the share of people aged 65-74 who used internet in the last three months in 2020. According to their graphic, Greece ranks on the third lowest position with only Croatia and Bulgaria following closely behind.



However, Statista also published a survey regarding the share of daily internet users in Greece in terms of age from 2014 to 2020. This share went from 26% in 2014 to 50% in 2020 for users between 55 and 64. [4]

Greece is still behind regarding digitalization but is improving tremendously since the pandemic.

[3] Pratt, M. K. (2019b). ICT (information and communications technology, or technologies). *CIO*. https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/ICT-information-and-communications-technology-or-technologies

[4] *Greece: share of daily internet user, by age | Statista*. (2022, February 23). Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1241512/greece-internet-users-use-accessed-internet-daily-age/

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II/The Covid period has revealed some interesting data concerning digitalization

The Covid 19 pandemic worked as a catalyst for digital transition. Indeed, according to the DESI Greece 2022 report, the digitalization of Greece's public services expand rapidly since the beginning of the Covid pandemic and continues to do so. Many platforms have since then been created such as governmental sites of eServices, banks and healthcare sites. The Greek Ministry of Digital Governance published a 'Digital Transformation Bible' for the years 2020-2025, in an attempt to catch up with other European Union countries. This strategy was to be put in place before the pandemic but the urgent need of Greek digitalization made it move faster. In this strategy, seven objectives are defined : " Safe, fast, and reliable access to the Internet for all. A digital state offering better digital services to the citizens for all life events. Development of digital skills for **all** citizens. Facilitate the transformation to digital enterprise. Support and strengthening of digital innovation. Making productive use of public administration data. Incorporating digital technologies to all economic sectors.' [5]

III/ The programs available in Greece to help older people to use eServices and develop ICT skills

Many programs have start to flourish since the heavy digitalization of the world and the implementation of eServices.

First, the 50plus Hellas, a non- profit organization which deals with protecting the rights of people over 50 years old, initiate different programs and projects to help the elderly grow their ICT skills.

From 2012 to 2017, this association created the program 'Access to the digital world' with the help of Age Platform Europe. Its goal was to promote a better access to the digital world to elderly people

[5] The Digital Transformation "bible" of Greece (2020-2025). (2021, January 13). https://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/topics/business-r-d/7379-the-digital-transformation-%E2%80%9Cbible%E2%80%9D-of-greece-2020-2025

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by educating them on the topic. Four educational centers were in operation in the region of Attica and allowed the participants to learn how to navigate internet, use different social medias, for free.

In April 2021, 50plus Hellas, joined the 'Digital Inclusion for older people project' in cooperation with the 65+ Elder Rights Association from Turkey. Through this project, they aim at teaching older people to use apps like banking, health, shopping, or public services. It focuses on permitting elderly people to work with digital transactions with more confidence.

Moreover, the 'FAITH' project was put in place by the Age platform Europe from January 2021 to January 2023. It focused on helping the population of 55+ years old to grow their ICT skills and by doing so transact freely online. It was carried out in 4 European countries included Greece and was based on the engagement of peer-to-peer support as well as the family and the local community service network.

Another interesting project is called 'a hug for the third e-age'. It defends the right to equal access and participation of people 65+ in the digital world. According to their website 'Data *shows that e-banking is used by 8% of the 65+ population'.* It is conducted in 5 cities in Greece (Patras, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Chania and Athens) for a duration of 22 months, starting November 2022. It is also linked to an app (Αγκαλια 65+) or Hug 65+ by elderly people for elderly people. 400 beneficiaries will be trained through the app to learn how to use their rights in the digital world.

Furthermore, the Greek Ministry of Education and Culture and of Digital Governance has called in May 2022, the Greek institutions for a strengthening of digital skills of children and elderly. To achieve this goal, they put the program 'Digital skills for older people and children' in place. More specifically, concerning the 65+ age group, they will provide digital education and support in accessing digital services in three different municipalities. In doing so, 30 regional structures will be adapted in digital corners to be able to operate with appropriate electronic equipment and to teach both groups.

IV/ One example of a good practice that works well and helps older people to use eServices efficiently

'Access to the digital world' program took place from 2012 to 2017. According to the site of 'Age platform Europe', this project of the 50plus Hellas Association (which is part of the civil society

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organization Age Platform Europe) helped many older people to use eServices and grow their ICT skills :

"-The percentage of people who "used the Internet daily" doubled after the end of the lessons

-Increase of 30% of people who say that "through the Internet they can maintain their social contacts or make new ones"

-Increase of 33% of people saying that "knowing the use of their Internet makes them feel more secure in dealing with their everyday issues"

-Increase of 35% of participants who state that they "...feel more autonomy and self-efficacy when using the Internet and other applications such as Email and Skype".

-Increase of 53% of people who state that "learning about the Internet and new technologies does not scare them anymore and they are not afraid to experiment on their own".

-Increase of 36% of the people who say that "through the course they realized the security risks for the interception of personal data that exists while browsing"."[6]

To conclude, many projects are being created to help the Greek senior population to adapt to the digital World and to be able to respond to its demands concerning healthcare, banking and other online services. However, there is a divide between rural and urban Greece. Most of the projects have centers in metropolitan cities, making it difficult for the rural elderly population to have the same access to these opportunities. There is still a lot to be done to reduce the divide between the elderly and the non-elderly population.

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[6] , *"Access to the Digital World" project improves the digital skills of older adults in Greece | AGE Platform*. (n.d.), *October 2017*. https://age-platform.eu/age-member-news/access-digital-world-project-improves-digital-skills-older-adults-greece

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