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

UPI – ljudska univerza Žalec

UPI LJUDSKA UNIVERZA ŽALEC
šola prijaznih ljudi

Co-funded by the European Union

Over the years, digital technology has honestly changed our world and the way we live. And it's sure to do even more in the future. Digitalization brings many benefits. But it is precisely these advantages that are widening the gap between those who benefit and those who do not. In addition to the wide gap between rural and urban areas in terms of accessibility to high-performance connectivity itself, differences in the skills and competences that are key to making use of the digital solutions available are also acute.

Slovenia is among the most developed countries at EU level in terms of household ICT equipment: in the EU, 65% of households had access to the internet in the first quarter of 2009, compared to 64% in Slovenia, 56% of households in both the EU and Slovenia had a broadband internet connection 56% of households. Slovenia can now boast a fairly exemplary overall level of ICT use, which is broadly in line with the European average. However, it is an undeniable fact that the inclusion of older generation in taking advantage of this is far too weak.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (Surs), on 1 July 2021, one fifth of the population in Slovenia was aged 65 or over.

"This part of the population can fall victim to the digital divide, as the lack of use of digital technologies can push them to the margins of what is happening in modern society. At the same time, this age group represents an opportunity for the economy in terms of providing products and services that are relevant to older people and their needs - the 'silver economy'," says Surs.

In the first three months of last year, 96% of people aged 65-74 in Slovenia used a mobile phone. Of these, 58% used a smartphone. By 2021, this age group will be dominated by the use of a traditional mobile phone, which has only basic functions such as the ability to make calls and send SMS messages.

In the first quarter of 2021, 62% of the population aged 65-74 used the internet, compared to an EU average of 65%. 48% of the population in this age group accessed the internet on a daily basis, which is also lower than the EU average of 50%.

Meanwhile, 31% of the population said they had never used the internet, slightly higher than the European average of 28%. Of these, 56% explained that they did not feel the need to use the internet, 39% found it uninteresting and 28% explained that they did not have the skills to use the internet or a computer, according to Eurostat.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

In terms of skills, the statistics office's data show that 45% of 65- to 74-year-olds lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to use ICT last year. The EU average, meanwhile, was 41%.

10% had very modest skills (compared to 8% in the EU) and 11% had modest skills, which is the same as the EU average. 15% of 65-74 year olds had deficient and basic skills (compared to 15% and 17% in the EU), while 4% had very well developed skills, compared to 8% in the EU average (compared to 8% in the EU).

Surs highlighted the market potential of this age group. Between January and March 2021, 51% of internet users aged 65-74 searched online for information about products or services, well above the EU average of 42%.

A quarter of them made at least one online purchase during this period (EU average 29%). Of these, 89% made a purchase from Slovenian online sellers, 29% from online sellers in other EU Member States and 23% from online sellers in the rest of the EU.

Why is it necessary to address the digital skills of older people?

Of course, we are not talking about torturing the over-70s (or anyone who doesn't need it) with the basics of coding, but the fact is that without basic internet skills, they cannot participate equally in society, nor can they access the most basic services.

Let's look at a very basic example. Before the covida-19 pandemic, it was possible to go to the doctor just like that, even unsolicited. Of course, you then had to wait a long time for a turn, but the option was there. Today, it is not possible to see a doctor without an appointment. But how to make an appointment? It is more the exception than the rule that clinics answer the phone. So all we have to do is send an e-mail.

But what about those who don't know how to do this or don't have a computer or smartphone? If they are lucky, a younger relative or friend can help them. But it can also be annoying to keep asking for help. These individuals are also in the same predicament if they just need a new prescription or want to book an appointment for a vaccination.

Even those elderly people who are in institutional care were in some way excluded from society during the covida-19 pandemic. Among other things, it has been shown that elderly people in nursing homes do not have access to communication devices for remote conversations. Relatives were not allowed to enter the nursing homes, leaving them without contact with their loved ones.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by the European Union

The programs available in Slovenia to help older people to use eServices and develop ICT skills (example of a good practice)

1. Project: “Digitalno vključen” (https://digitalnovkljuceni.si/)

The project DIGITALLY INCLUDED - Intergenerational Synergies in a Digital Learning Environment for Quality Ageing addresses the inclusion of older people in the information society through training on the use of devices and a new online platform with content for older people. The digital platform, the first of its kind in Slovenia, enables active participation and intergenerational exchange, thus contributing to increasing the digital literacy of older people, their greater social inclusion and to reducing the intergenerational digital divide.

The purpose of the platform:

- Lifelong learning for the acquisition of functional digital skills - through self-learning videos

- learning to use key e-services for older people - through self-learning videos

- access to content and programmes on active and healthy ageing - with content produced by older people;

- participation and learning in intergenerational virtual meetings, which will enable older people to make intensive use of the knowledge they have acquired through intergenerational networking.

2. Organization Simbioza (https://simbioza.eu/)

Simbioza offers a wide range of group and individual non-formal education courses, which break down the fear of technology with tailored content and qualified lecturers, and guide older users into the digital world in a friendly and professional way. Courses on computer science and how to use your smartphone and other smart devices are among the most popular and well attended.

The digital skills they acquire enable older users to become more independent, better informed, better able to communicate with their loved ones, and to enjoy a better quality of life and a new confidence in using their smart devices. Many new and unforgettable friendships were also forged in the pleasant intergenerational interaction at Symbiosis.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Sources :

- https://racunalniske-novice.com/uporaba-ikt-med-starejsimi-pod-povprecjem-eu/
- https://www.slovenec.org/2022/01/20/digitalna-izkljucenost-starejsih/
- http://znanost.sta.si/3038054/na-svetovni-dan-telekomunikacij-letos-v-ospredju-starejsi-uporabniki-ikt
- https://simbioza.eu/
- https://digitalnovkljuceni.si/

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.