



# DigitalScouts

ENHANCING THE DIGITAL LITERACY  
AND PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

## National Report for Germany

Digital participation of people 60+: readiness, support structures,  
professionalisation of supporters and examples of opportunities.

## About this publication

This report summarises the results of the research activities carried out in Germany within the Erasmus+ project **DigitalScouts: Enhancing the Digital Literacy and Participation in Europe** (cooperation partnership in adult education, project number: 2022-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000086499). More information is available at [DigitalScouts.eu](https://DigitalScouts.eu).

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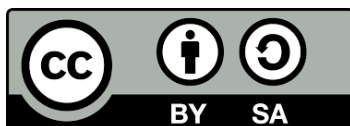
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## 1. Introduction and methodology

The COVID19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital technologies and skills for participation in all areas of society. Although the digital divide between younger and older generations in Europe is getting smaller, the need for support remains, in particular for the very old and those with lower levels of formal education.

The consortium members of the DigitalScouts project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, aim to train people who want to support older people in using digital tools, thus enabling them to benefit from the opportunities of digital participation. By digital participation we mean that citizens use digital tools (such as the Internet, social media, etc.) to take part in personally relevant areas of life, be they social, cultural, political or related to health promotion.

The main focus of the project is to develop an educational offer that qualifies "digital scouts" to enable older people to benefit from the opportunities of digitalisation. For this purpose, a Digital Training will be developed as an independent self-learning course. It focuses on the various possibilities of digital participation and health promotion and enables digital scouts to acquire comprehensive knowledge to support people aged 60+ in using digital tools according to their individual interests. In addition, a Toolkit for Trainers will be available to support adult educators in embedding the digital training into a blended learning course.

The first outcome of the project will be a European Compendium highlighting the importance of promoting the digital participation of older citizens. It will also provide illustrative examples from the participating countries of how older people can benefit from using digital tools in terms of cultural, political and social participation as well as health promotion.

In all countries involved in the DigitalScouts project (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania), a research phase was carried out to prepare the development of the training materials and to identify the current situation of older people with regard to digital participation. This phase of the project also focused on determining respective local and regional offers and structures to facilitate digital literacy, as well as to identify best practice examples of digital opportunities for people aged 60+.

In order to achieve these objectives, the partners of the project consortium:

1. carried out desk research in their national countries and languages, taking into account the current public discourse, recent publications, databases and policy papers, and
2. conducted interviews with potential supporters of older people and therefore participants in the DigitalScouts training, as well as with relevant experts, stakeholders and practitioners, in the field of e.g. policy, administration, science or advocacy, active in training or supporting trainers or older people.

The questions for the semi-structured interviews with experts and stakeholders as well as with potential training participants (see Annex: Lead questions used in guided interviews) were adapted according to the function, expertise and personal background of the interviewees. One person was interviewed face-to-face, one by telephone and all others by videoconference.

In Germany, four representatives of the target group of potential digital scouts were interviewed. Their experience of supporting people in the 3rd age to use digital tools is very varied: From no experience (f), to educational offers as volunteers (f and m), to a self-employed adult educator (f) interested in participating in the DigitalScouts training.

Seven experts and practitioners at different levels and working with different target groups were interviewed:

- Katharina Kunze, project manager (f) of the Digitaler Engel project (see section 2.2 and 2.3) of the association “Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V.”, which has recently been running online trainings for professional and volunteer trainers,
- Anne Schmitt, the training manager and educator (f) of the Di@-Lotsen project of the Institut für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikation (Institute for Media Pedagogy and Communication) (operating throughout Hessen),
- Janine Wein (f), media educator who offers group training for older people at the Zentrum für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung (ZWW) of the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz,
- Robert Rempel (m), member of the research project “Alter und Technik im Kontext von Pflege und Bildung” at the RheinMain University of Applied Sciences (HSRM), Department of Social Affairs,
- Matthias Lahr-Kurten (m), coordinating at Hessian Federal Office the Di@-Lotsen project to promote voluntary support structures in Hesse,
- an expert (f) in the field of digital support for older people and the professionalisation of educational staff at national level,
- Stefanie Zimmermann, member (f), member of the senior citizens' council in Wiesbaden.

One person was interviewed face-to-face, one by telephone and all others by videoconference. In addition, Karin Siepmann's own experience as a training manager and coordinator of the regional project “Digital Guides for Golden Aged”, as well as the findings from the contributions to the stakeholder meeting “Professionalisation of educational staff for the digital education of older people in Germany and Europe” of BAGSO - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen e.V. and the National Coordination Office European Agenda for Adult Policy at the National Agency at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training on 8 May 2007 have been incorporated into the report.

This report summarises the results of the research activities in Germany and gives an overview of the situation of older people with regard to their digital readiness (infrastructure, internet use, digital skills) and relevant limiting aspects for their digital participation (income, formal education level, gender), the support structures and offers for the digital participation of older people and the professionalisation of trainers in Germany.

The following report sections also contain lessons learnt from existing training of trainers and recommendations on what content and skills are important for the training of digital scouts. Good practice examples of digital participation opportunities for people aged 60+ are also described in this report.

## 2. Results of the research phase in Germany

### 2.1 Status quo of the digital readiness of people aged 60+

The status quo of digital readiness described in this section is mainly based on Eurostat data and the results of the SIM-study [Senior citizens, Information, Media], provided by Medienpädagogische Forschungsverbund Südwest (mpfs) - a cooperation between two federal media authorities, the "Gerontology" work group of the Universität Heidelberg and the Katholische Universität Freiburg. This is cross-sectional study on the current media use of older people in Germany and complements these data with a gerontological perspective. For the baseline study, a representative sample of n=3,005 people was interviewed in 2021 (the population was the German-speaking population in private households at their main residence in the Federal Republic of Germany aged 60 and over, including people in old age) (mpfs, 2021).

In order to describe the digital readiness of senior citizens in Germany, this report first looks at internet use. Eurostat uses data from the microcensus, which only covers people up to the age of 74. The data refer to the most recent internet use. Table 1 shows the proportion of individuals who have used the internet in the last 12 months. The proportions are above the EU average overall and for the older age groups for which data are available. They suggest that Internet use around and after work is already part of everyday life for most people.

Individuals: Internet use in the last 12 months (percentage, 2022)

	Overall	55-64 years old	65-75 years old
Germany	93,01	91,58	79,13
European Union	91,14	88,04	69,73

Table 1: Internet use in the last 12 months (Eurostat, 2023a)

The SIM study provides more detailed data on citizens aged 60 and over, including on **internet access**, which **83%** of respondents have, 78% also have a private Wi-Fi network and 75% own a computer or laptop (mpfs, 2021). According to the SIM study, some **81% of the respondents use the internet at least occasionally**, and **66% go online every day or almost every day**. A smartphone with extensive computer functions is available in 72% of respondents' households. Of those who use a smartphone, 63% use it daily, 41% even several times a day, 51% use a computer or laptop daily, 30% use a tablet, and 26% use a smart TV daily (ibid.).

Internet use varies widely according to different socio-demographic characteristics. These results of the SIM study show once again that people aged 60 and over are a very heterogeneous group.

**46% of those who don't use the Internet are 80 years or over**  
(Population 60 years or older, mpfs, 2023)

The younger the respondents, the more likely they are to be online: 92% of people aged 60-69, 82% of people aged 70-79 and 51% of people aged 80 and over, use the internet and digital media.

Due to the different biographical use of technology in the working phase, there is a **gender gap** in terms of internet use and digital skills (see also below). Men aged 60 or over are significantly more likely to use the internet (86%) than women (77%). At least among those who use a smartphone at least sometimes, the subjective assessment of their own skills in using a smartphone does not show a significant difference between men and women in Germany (mpfs, 2021).

*"Especially from the age of 80, the differences between the genders increase significantly. While 53 per cent of women and 70 per cent of men are online in the age group of 80 and 84, only 22 per cent of women and 57 per cent of men are online from the age of 85"* (mpfs, 2021, p. 15).

Other relevant characteristics identified in the SIM study were **household size** (people living alone use the Internet significantly less) and place of residence according to **geographical location** (Internet use by 83% of people over 60 in western Germany and 72% in eastern Germany) (ibid).

Among those who do not use the Internet, there are more people with **health problems**, i.e. vulnerable groups. The SIM study shows that the average scores of non-users are significantly lower than those of internet users for vision, hearing, motor skills and memory. They are also significantly more likely to be in need of care (16% compared to 4%). Despite this, only 11% said that physical impairment was the reason for not using the internet (ibid).

Especially for the international comparison in the DigitalScouts project, it is important to assess the role of **affordability** in Internet use. 25% of the people who do not use the Internet stated that the costs do at least partly play a role. Compared with other reasons (see below), the costs play a rather minor role. However, a strong correlation between **income** and internet access can be seen. On the other hand, the existence of an internet connection or devices does not necessarily come along with internet usage (ibid.).

Another indicator of digital readiness is the **overall level of digital skills**. The digital skills are collected by Eurostat every two years for all European countries as part of the ESS ICT survey and provide a good basis for cross-country comparisons (even if the national statistical offices or ministries responsible for the measurement use different samples). The Digital Skills Indicator 2.0 (DSI) measures digital skills as an index of activities in 5 different areas. It is based on the assumption that the performance of the activities is associated with corresponding skills. Compared to internet usage data, the overall digital skills figures provide a more comprehensive picture and are also used as an indicator for the implementation of the EU's digital readiness objectives (Digital Decade and Digital Skills Agenda).

Figure 1 illustrates the proportions of individuals who have at least basic overall digital skills. Looking at different age groups, it shows that the difference in digital skills is already evident in younger age groups and that a high level of internet use does not necessarily go hand in hand with a high level of overall digital skills (what means experience in all areas considered) - this is true for people of all ages.

The influence of socio-demographic characteristics is not only evident in the use of digital media, but is also reflected in people's skills in using ICT. The ESS ICT data shows that people with higher levels of education have higher overall digital skills (see figure 1). Only around 12% of people aged 55-74 with a low level of education have basic or above basic overall digital skills, while the

proportion of people with a high level of education in the same age group is around 60%. There is also a gender gap in the use of digital media, but also in the skills available. For example, around 41% of men aged 55-74 have basic or above basic overall digital skills, compared to around 31% of women in the same age group (Eurostat, 2023b).

Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills (percentage), Germany 2021

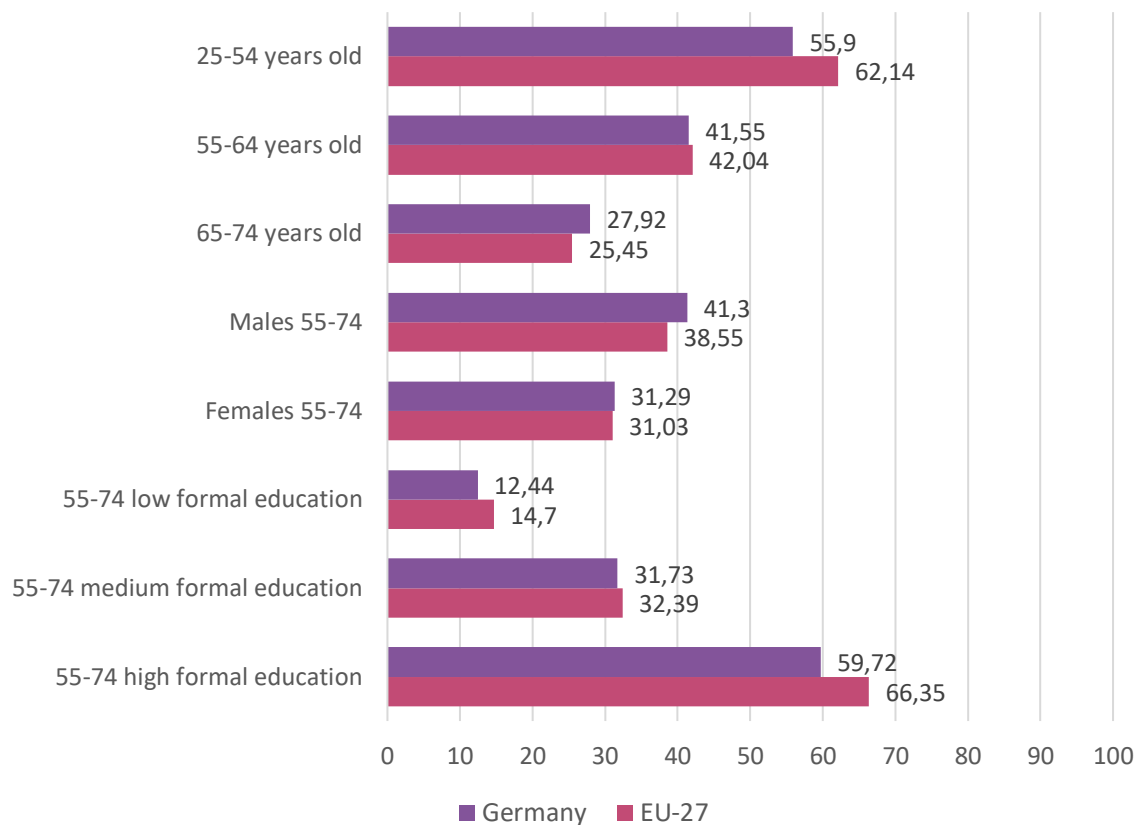


Figure 1: Individuals with basic or above basic overall digital skills in Germany 2021 (Eurostat, 2023b)

The socio-demographic characteristics can help to understand differences between individuals. However, it is important to identify the specific barriers people face in order to provide support to overcome them. This was also the subject of analysis in the SIM study (and, in the view of the study authors, will be the subject of future analyses).

When respondents who never use the internet (n=571) were asked why, more than two-thirds said that they get enough information and entertainment from other "traditional" media (88%) or that they simply do not need the internet (81%). Two thirds (66%) say they have neither the time nor the inclination to use the internet. Finally, more than a third of non-users do not trust themselves to use it (41%) or complain about the insecurity of the Internet (39%). 38% say they are generally hostile to the Internet (mpfs, 2021).

***T**he main reason to be offline from the point of view of those affected is that there does not exist a need or specific benefit. For most of them there is also this initial hurdle to overcome, which they do not have time for or are not keen on doing. The offline users aged 80 and above in particular lack the social support and the confidence to manage this hurdle. In order to avoid a further digital*



*divide, it is particularly necessary to look after this group of people, to present to them possible specific advantages of the internet and to accompany them during the starting phase. (...) In all, the results of the first SIM-study shows that the generation of persons aged 60 and above is very heterogeneous regarding access and use of the internet and digital applications. This heterogeneity is based on socio-demographic features such as age, level of education and income, gender and size of household and thus also on psychological influences such as for example, self-efficacy, technical biography, attitude towards technology and obsolescence. Beyond that the findings of the SIM-study indicate that there is a great requirement for support to convey digital competences, education and sovereignty in old age. In order to prepare this it is important to arrange for offers in education, consultation and support directed specifically to the target groups in order to consider heterogeneous requirements, needs, existing knowledge, interests and life situations. Here it shows that not only offline users need support but also online users still have a requirement for information and advice. Even if it is expected that the percentage of older people not using the internet reduces further, there is still a continuous requirement in the long run for support in face of the dynamic technical developments.” (mpfs, 2021, p. 84ff.)*

## 2.2 Support structures in regard to digital participation

This section provides an overview of training and support structures for older people in the use of digital media in Germany. Some of the advantages and disadvantages are mentioned, initiatives are presented as examples and the most important needs and policies are outlined.

In Germany, **volunteer initiatives** are the most common support and training provision for digital participation of older people. They are variable and often take place in a low-threshold form, e.g. in associations, multi-generation houses, meeting places (of welfare organisations), senior citizens' offices or religious communities (Stiel, 2023). There is a wide variety of offers, e.g. courses, home visits, consultation hours or groups.

Volunteer support is much more low-threshold than more formal educational provision and therefore reaches a wider variety of people, but its availability varies regionally (there are fewer in the east of Germany, many in the south). In addition, the liability and insurance situation is often unclear (ibid).

Various programmes and projects are initiated at the federal-state level.<sup>1</sup> One example is the **Di@-Lotsen** [digital guides] project in Hesse, in which the federal state supports institutions that introduce digital media to older people with the help of volunteers. 41 municipalities, churches, associations and other institutions were selected in 4 application rounds to become project sites. The project sites coordinate the work of the Di@-guides, who are trained by the Institut für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikation and supported in setting up low-threshold support and education offers. The project sites receive advice and support in networking with other stakeholders. In addition, the project sites receive financial support for the acquisition of the necessary hardware. The training of volunteers and the resulting recommendations are discussed in the following chapters.

In addition to programmes and projects at the federal state level, there are national programmes (described below), many of which aim to provide information and materials and to support the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples can be found here: <https://www.digital-kompass.de/aktuelles/digital-im-alter-wer-unterstuetzt-wo>

local establishment of low-threshold services in which volunteers provide support for digital participation.

The "**Servicestelle Bildung und Lernen im Alter**" (Service Centre for Education and Learning in Old Age), which is run by BAGSO (Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations) and is a nationwide contact point for digital education for older people, including the website **wissensdurstig.de**, which provides a nationwide database with information on educational opportunities, examples of good practice, materials, information for educational providers and a service hotline (BAGSO, 2023).

In addition, the **DigitalPakt Alter** (Digital Pact for Older People) initiative, coordinated by BAGSO, has created a network comprising the Federal Ministry for Senior Citizens (BMFSFJ), the federal states, local authorities, business, science and civil society, with the aim of enabling people to participate more in digital life and making suitable digital training widely available. The programme also promotes the establishment and expansion of contact points, so-called places of digital experience. The network currently comprises 150 digital experience locations (the aim is to establish 300 local points during the course of the project (BMFSFJ, 2023)), which are aimed in particular at those who have little experience with digital media and invite them to try it out.

Under the umbrella of the "DigitalPakt Alter", the project "**Digitaler Engel**" (Digital Angel) is a concrete measure to promote the digital participation of older people. It is part of the German government's implementation strategy for shaping digital change and is being implemented by Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V. with funding from the BMFSFJ. A bus travels to various locations to provide direct, low-threshold support to older people on site, in institutions or in public places, and to answer specific questions. In addition, a range of useful materials such as video tutorials, instructions and tips are made available online (Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V., 2023). The training offered within the project is described in chapter 2.3.

The BMFSFJ further promotes the BAGSO project "**Künstliche Intelligenz für ein gutes Altern**" (Ageing well with AI) The "AI for ageing well" project therefore aims to strengthen the AI skills of older people by training multipliers and testing appropriate technologies at several locations in Germany (BMFSFJ, 2023).

BAGSO and the initiative "Deutschland sicher im Netz" have further initiated the project "**Digital-Kompass**" funded by the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV). Having funded and supported the development of 100 local sites providing volunteer digital support to older people, the focus is now on people with disabilities. It aims to help people with disabilities understand and experience the many opportunities that digitalisation offers. To this end, DigitalKompass offers a range of services such as digital learning tandems in people's own homes and advice from qualified volunteers in local meeting places (BAGSO and Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V., 2023).

**Traditional education institutions** are another option for older people who want to learn more about digital media. Here, **paid staff** such as adult education centres, denominational educational institutions, universities and libraries provide support. These forms of learning are led by pedagogical staff, but most of them are honorary paid staff (with an increasing tendency). These offers are quite widespread in Germany, but they are costly for older people, offer little in the way of co-creation and individual guidance, and reach only target groups that are generally open to traditional forms of education (Stiel, 2023).

There are also **self-employed people and start-ups offering** support or training at different locations or online. This area is very diverse and includes e. g. companies of young founders, start-ups and individuals. These services are often costly, only available online, sometimes inappropriate in terms of language, and not geared to contemporary notions of age (Stiel, 2023).

In addition, there are professionals in **housing or technology counselling** (“Wohn- und Technikberatung”) in housing advice centres, care advice centres, associations and advice centres. These are affiliated to municipalities, welfare organisations or associations or are financed by long-term care insurance funds. Some of these counselling services are accessible and usually free of charge. There are also combinations of this support with voluntary initiatives. Advice is usually provided on an ad hoc basis and is mainly focused on assistive technologies rather than ICT basics (ibid.). One respondent (an expert at national level) sees a great opportunity for home-based services in the combination of voluntary technical support (in the area of basic ICT) with the existing provision of housing counselling, which has already been tested as a model (see Weidekamp-Maicher et al., 2021).

In Germany, in addition to medical caregivers, there are also social caregivers in residential and domestic care who support participation, including digital participation. However, there are few **carers** who are **specifically trained in technology support** (Stiel, 2023).

In regard to the support structures in Germany, the **needs** described by the experts interviewed can be summarised as follows: The support and training offered by staff and volunteers is not sufficient to meet the demand, especially in rural areas and to reach certain groups. Overall, older people with migrant background, in need of care or very low formal education are not included well in the current digital support and educational offers in Germany.

The state of Hesse has also recognised the need for visiting services (“aufsuchende Angebote”) and has adapted the criteria for participation in the Di@-Lotsen project accordingly.

### 2.3 Findings on professionalisation of support of older people using ICT

In the following, the most important existing structures and possibilities in Germany for the qualification and training of educators and supporters for the digital participation of older people are outlined and illustrated with examples. The specific challenges and needs for the development and expansion of training opportunities are also outlined.

**Volunteers** involved in ICT support for older people are mostly in their post-professional phase, mostly with a technical, rarely with a pedagogical background. Two-thirds of the volunteers are men. Volunteers rarely have geragogical expertise, meaning specific knowledge about teaching and learning for older adults. The training of volunteers is mostly unsystematic (not formalised) and often limited to initial training. Geragogical principles are usually not taught but are very much in demand for training (Stiel, 2023).

At national level, the project Digitaler Engel provides training for Volunteers.

There are several qualification programmes in the federal states and at regional level, of which only two are described here as examples.

The training of volunteers in the **Di@-Lotsen** project is not about technical knowledge and not about a blueprint that works everywhere (although participants often expect this). The aim is to enable volunteers, who are assigned to a specific Di@-Lotsen centre, to find out which support

offer fits their needs, the people they support and the local situation, to try out new things, to exchange ideas, to learn from each other and from the experiences of other participants. This is done in an online training in two modules, in between which the participants apply their acquired knowledge and formats in practice. The methods used in the training are input, exercises and exchange, with the exact structure depending on the needs of the participants. Tools, applications, tests (digital skills), etc. are also tested or used. The number of participants is limited to 20. After the training, the trainer remains available to answer questions. Participants can also take part in future Di@-Lotsen trainings.

The Landesanstalt für Kommunikation (LFK) in Baden-Württemberg and eight partners, including the University of Heidelberg, implemented the **KommiT** project from 2015 to 2020, targeting people who are inexperienced with technology or have limited mobility. The aim is to introduce these people to the "digital world" in order to strengthen their digital participation (LFK, 2023). The project developed several training units and modules. This training was designed for the peer-led seniors as well as for the accompanying peers. Two modules are specific train-the-trainer modules for volunteers. Two modules are specific train-the-trainer modules for volunteers. These deal with "learning in old age" and "self-efficacy" and are available for download (ibid.). The project's findings have also been incorporated into a transfer case, which can be used to implement similar projects in other municipalities. It includes detailed descriptions of the training and support for the technology guides (KommiT, 2020).

For **paid staff**, there are still very limited opportunities for study and further training in the field of geragogy. So far, geragogy is only offered as a degree programme at one university in Germany: as a part-time master's programme at the University of Education in Freiburg.

**Self-employed people and start-ups** in the field of digital literacy education are seldom trained in geragogical principles and are more likely to be located in the fields of IT and marketing (Stiel 2023).

An example of very comprehensive training, including geragogical principles, is the project "**Digital Guides for Golden Agers**", funded by the Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, in which BerufsWege für Frauen e.V. trained women to become "digital guides" from 2020 to 2022. The curriculum consisted of strengthening digital, methodological-didactic, social and application skills. The learning format was blended learning and consisted of online, hybrid and face-to-face courses, enriched with practical implementation sessions with older people in different contexts. The total number of learning units was 240 and the timetable was throughout the week, taking into account the needs of work commitments and time constraints. An essential part of the qualification was to enable the participants to develop their individual service portfolio and subsequently a sustainable business model adapted to the current and specific needs of older people. In addition, an extensive local network was developed together with the digital guides and municipal and private actors in the social and educational sector in the Wiesbaden region.

A geragogical-technical curriculum for **housing and technology advisors** is still missing. There is no specific qualification for technology advisors available. There are also no geragogical-technical modules in education and further training for residential or outpatient **caregivers**, additional qualifications are rare.

From 2023 onwards, BerufsWege für Frauen offers a two-day training course (16 hours) for social care workers on the subject of digital care services for residential and outpatient care facilities for older people. In this training offer for professional carers, for example, the use of VR glasses is

included. For professional caregivers however, the demand is clearly greater than the supply (Stiel 2023).

According to the experts interviewed at national level, there is a need for more qualification and professionalisation in Germany in order to provide high-quality training throughout the country.

For example, the experience of the **Digitaler Engel** project, which has toured the whole Germany between 2019 and 2022, has made the need for training very clear. Many organisations and people who support older people locally have expressed the need for training opportunities.

*“Many partners involved in local work with older people would like to become multipliers or knowledge mediator, but they don't really know how to start and have many questions.”*

(Katharina Kunze, Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V., project manager Digitaler Engel)

In the follow-up project, the offer was expanded to include support for people who want to teach digital skills. Also funded by the Federal Ministry for Senior Citizens (BMFSFJ), an online training course was developed based on the questions of potential learners from the pilot project. The 7 learning modules, which can be attended by up to 25 people each, can be booked individually and last 90 minutes each. The exact structure and process will depend on the composition of the participants. This offer is open to all interested professionals and volunteers and is free of charge for participants.<sup>2</sup>

In general, only temporary, project-based training opportunities are available to volunteers. According to one of the experts interviewed this is partly due to the structural responsibilities at different levels. At the national level, no permanent structures can be created, as education is the responsibility of the federal states. A large proportion of volunteers are in the post-professional phase. In terms of education, federal states often do not take into account citizens aged 65 and over. At municipal level, there is a responsibility for providing basic public services. Municipal support for older people includes education and encounters, but is not yet obligatory for municipalities and therefore often not financed.

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<sup>2</sup> More information in German language can be found here: [digitaler-engel.org/online-schulungen-fuer-wissensvermittlnde](https://digitaler-engel.org/online-schulungen-fuer-wissensvermittlnde).

## 2.4 Examples of opportunities for digital participation of people 60+

### 2.4.1 Die Gute Stunde: Kultur im Dialog

Germany

Areas covered: Social participation, cultural participation

#### 1. Short description

“Die Gute Stunde” [The Good Hour] enables people to participate in cultural activities when they are unable to attend cultural events in person. Experiencing culture together in a group increases the quality of life and joy and promotes people's health.

Several times a month, Zoom raises the digital curtain on a new cultural event. Music, film, (scenic) readings, art tours and much more are created by artists and cultural workers. Half an hour before the event, the digital foyer opens for technical questions or just to meet and greet. After the event, there is always the opportunity to talk to each other and the artists. In addition, social institutions have the possibility to request individual or tailor-made events.

#### 2. Implementation and objectives

The programme is organised by the team of "Die Gute Stunde" and is designed with artists and cultural offers from Germany and German-speaking countries.

At present, the "Gute Stunde" offers are available online via Zoom once a week, mostly in the afternoon from 3-4 pm. Participation is free. Participants receive a Zoom link after registering by e-mail or by telephone. For some events, participants' individual wishes can be taken into account, e.g. request for a concert. Some events, such as online museum tours, have a limited number of participants.

The events are designed to give people with reduced mobility the opportunity to participate in cultural events and to interact socially with other participants and artists.

#### 3. Key facts

The original target group was mainly older people with reduced mobility. Due to the positive feedback after 2 years of events, “Die Gute Stunde” is now also offered to different target groups with specific characteristics or needs, e.g. offers are designed especially for people with dementia.

In the past, some providers have offered “Die Gute Stunde” as part of an existing group offering (e.g. afternoon café). In this case, the transmission by projector was experienced by a group of people together, thus strengthening social participation among each other.

The offer is free of charge for the participants. The idea is that social service providers book a subscription.

The offer is transmitted via Zoom. The participant must therefore be able (or enabled) to use Zoom. In the case of a group event, the technical support is provided by the organiser. Service providers also offer individual technical support.

#### 4. Results

“It was great to learn the technology and to get in touch with the culture and the people.” (Brigitte Barkhausen-Sack, Wiesbaden)

“I feel so richly blessed by this hour!” (Doris Immel, Mülheim)

The initiative won 1st prize in the “Smart Community” category in a competition run by the Hessian Ministry for Digital Strategy and Development. It is still ongoing.

#### 5. More information

Website [[diegutestunde.org](http://diegutestunde.org)]

“Die Gute Stunde” can be attended from anywhere in the world and is free of charge for participants. DigitalScouts can take the opportunity to offer a joint visit to a cultural event and use it to train digital skills (use of tablets and zoom) “on the fly”.

### 2.4.2 Oll Inklusiv

Hamburg

Areas covered: Social participation, cultural participation

#### 1. Short Description

“Oll Inklusiv” is a non-profit initiative founded by Mitra Kassai in 2017 (Bargel, 2019). Their aim is to ensure that older people are involved in cultural activities. Therefore, a variety of activities are offered for “Senioren and Senioritas” [seniors (m) and pun of seniors and señoritas (f)], especially activities that encourage communication and meeting new people. For example, “Oll Inklusiv” offers a range of leisure activities, including visits to festivals and music clubs, as well as dance classes and visits to the cinema.

#### 2. Implementation and objectives

The founder, Mitra Kassai, is very involved in the activities herself. For example, she greets participants at the start of the activities, organises music bingo and acts as a DJ when they visit music clubs. Mitra Kassai is supported by volunteers and receives regular support from musicians, radio stations and artists.

All activities are designed to be accessible to all older people. This means that not only are all the places visited accessible, but also that all activities are offered free of charge or at a minimal extra cost. For most activities there is no need to book. Everyone is welcome to come and go as they please. Free water and biscuits are also provided at each activity. However, there are some activities, such as sports classes and excursions, that do require prior registration. This is an opportunity for older people who do not receive a large pension to stay active and keep in touch with

others. Through the messenger in the “Oll Inklusiv” app, participants can stay in touch with each other after the activities.

### 3. Key facts

As the activities are free of charge, the initiative is mainly funded by donations and crowdfunding. However, local individuals, such as club owners or festival organisers, often support the initiative by inviting groups. Anyone over the age of 60 can take part in the activities, so there are no requirements to be met.

### 4. Results

Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative was able to digitise its services. They created an app and a YouTube channel so that older people could stay active without putting themselves at risk. They offered courtyard concerts to older people so that they could meet in person with minimal risk. The courtyard concerts were uploaded to their YouTube channel, along with videos of dancing, cooking and singing.

Now that the situation around COVID-19 has eased and the focus has shifted back to face-to-face events, the digital features can still be used by people interested in the initiative's activities.

### 5. More information

Website [[oll-inklusive.de](http://oll-inklusive.de)]

YouTube Channel [[youtube.com/channel/UCP2w86l8tUtZZy\\_-1HX\\_B4A](https://youtube.com/channel/UCP2w86l8tUtZZy_-1HX_B4A)]

Podcast [[podtail.com/en/podcast/oll-inklusive-60-plus](http://podtail.com/en/podcast/oll-inklusive-60-plus)]

App [[oll-inklusive.de/die-oll-inklusive-app](http://oll-inklusive.de/die-oll-inklusive-app)]

## 2.4.3 Wege aus der Einsamkeit

Germany

Areas covered: Social participation, cultural participation, municipal participation, Health promotion

### 1. Short description

The non-profit association “Wege aus der Einsamkeit” (W.a.d.E., Ways out of Loneliness) was founded in December 2007 as a private initiative with the vision of improving the living conditions of older people in society.

### 2. Implementation and objectives

The initiative emphasises the positive aspects of ageing without glossing over the fears and dangers of old age. It aims to take people in their third age and their relatives seriously and to address their needs now and in the future. For this reason, the association not only supports nationwide concepts dealing with ageing issues, but has also been successfully initiating its own projects for years.



Since 2014, the initiative has also been working to encourage people over the age of 65 who have not yet dared to take digital steps to do so. Many digital events are offered free of charge. Puzzles, creative writing, dance, making music or workshops and presentations on a variety of topics are offered.

Free trainings on smartphone or tablet, online, in presence or hybrid, peer-to-peer learning and coming together of seniors, while playing games, dancing, doing puzzles, yoga and others.

The initiative also runs its own YouTube channel with training videos and offers daily events via Zoom. It recently published a self-help book on basic digital terms.

### 3. Key facts

Courses and events are available at all levels, especially for complete beginners. A telephone number is provided for visitors to the site to call for help with issues such as starting a Zoom conference.

W.a.d.E's services are funded entirely by donations and volunteer work and are free of charge to consumers. Cooperation partners are Facebook, Deutschland sicher im Netz, Diakonie Deutschland, Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland e.V. and 59plus.

### 4. Results

In March 2023, W.a.d.E. held its 1000th Zoom event and reached a total of 27,000 participants (90% women, 10% men) aged 65 to 95, many of whom are regulars.

The organisation and its chairperson, Dagmar Hirche, have received numerous awards and prizes, including the Google Impact Challenge and the Digital Female Leader Award.

### 5. More information

Weekly programme [[wegeausdereinsamkeit.de/termine](https://wegeausdereinsamkeit.de/termine)]

Youtube Channel [[youtube.com/@Wegeausdereinsamkeit](https://youtube.com/@Wegeausdereinsamkeit)]

#### 2.4.4 Verborgenes Wiesbaden: Discover with Virtual Reality

Wiesbaden

Areas covered: Social participation, cultural participation

##### 1. Short description

"Verborgenes Wiesbaden" is a project of the Media Management study programme at the RheinMain University of Applied Sciences. Under the motto "Hidden and Undiscovered", it digitises places that do not correspond to the typical tourist attractions but open up new perspectives.

##### 2. Implementation and objectives

The project started in the summer semester of 2022 under the direction of Martin Kraft. The student team was responsible for project management, technical

implementation, marketing and design. The "hidden places" were digitised with a 3D scanner and provided with interesting information.

Churches, industrial monuments, caves, old cinema palaces and concentration camp memorials in Wiesbaden and the surrounding area are now accessible and can be visited and viewed digitally, even by people with limited mobility. The past and the forgotten of one's own homeland can thus be experienced anew or even for the first time, enabling biographical exchange.

### 3. Key facts

The project is carried out in cooperation with various partners, including the Wiesbaden Cultural Office, the Parks Department and the Urban Development Corporation. It is free of charge and can be visited without any special technology, just with a web browser.

### 4. Results

The project currently consists of 13 locations. It will be continued with future students of the course.

Applications: Biographical work with older people, cultural experiences, local history, history.

### 5. More information

Website [[verborgenes-wiesbaden.de](http://verborgenes-wiesbaden.de)]

Instagram [[instagram.com/verborgenes\\_wiesbaden](https://www.instagram.com/verborgenes_wiesbaden)]

## 2.4.5 Digital Health and Care Applications: DIPA and DIGA

Germany

Area covered: Health promotion

### 1. Short Description

DiGAs are apps that are certified as medical devices and can be prescribed by the treating General Practitioner (GP). To get a DiGA on prescription, it must be listed in the digital health app directory. The inclusion of an app in this directory follows extensive efficacy testing.

### 2. Implementation and objectives

In Germany, the Digital Healthcare Act (DVG) came into force in December 2019. Among other things, it regulates digital health applications (DiGA) and digital care applications (DiPA).

A DiGA is designed to help improve knowledge about a disease and to monitor or specifically alleviate symptoms. For example, the app reminds the patient to take his or her daily medication or stores health data, such as blood sugar levels, so it can be discussed with the GP.

A DiPA is a digital care application designed to help care recipients and family caregivers cope better with everyday care. Some of them offer care recipients exercises to help stabilise or improve their health. They can be used either as an app on mobile devices (e.g. smartphone, tablet) or as a browser-based web application on a computer or laptop. DiPA is not prescribed but can be selected from the catalogue of care aids.

### 3. Results: Example Lindera - Mobility analysis and fall prevention

The Lindera mobility analysis app is a simple and accurate way to determine an individual's risk of falling. The smartphone camera is used to create a 3D analysis of gait. Using a short video recording and a questionnaire, the individual's risk of falling is determined and personalised fall prevention recommendations are given to improve mobility. The results can also be transferred to the care documentation software of e.g. nursing homes or home care services.

### 4. More information

DiPA and DiGA are reviewed by the Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) and included in the respective lists.

BfArM Website [[bfarm.de](https://www.bfarm.de)]

Lindera Website [[lindera.de](https://www.lindera.de)]

## 2.4.6 Omas gegen Rechts

Germany

Areas covered: Health promotion: Social participation, political participation

### 1. Short Description

The civil society initiative Omas gegen Rechts (grannies against the right) sees itself as a non-partisan organisation which, within the framework of Omas gegen Rechts Deutschland e.V. (grannies against the right), campaigns in various local groups throughout Germany for the equality of all citizens and the strengthening of German democracy.

### 2. Implementation and objectives

The initiative was originally founded in 2017 by Monika Salzer as a response to the coalition of the right-wing conservative and extreme right-wing parties ÖVP and FPÖ in Austria. On 27 January 2018, the first Facebook group was also founded in Germany, and the initiative quickly grew into a nationwide initiative that now has more than 15,000 members and around 60 other regional and 7 supra-regional German local groups involved in the activities. Facebook and other social media play a central role in the organisation of the initiative. The local groups are organised very independently of each other, which allows for more flexible political work that can react spontaneously to local and daily political events. The aim of the initiative is, as the name suggests, to oppose right-wing populism and radicalism and to stand up for more tolerance and equal rights for all people in society. Furthermore, the initiative shows solidarity with the Fridays for Future movement. The initiative focuses

especially on older women, who should be given a voice in the political landscape, as they are not perceived as a political force in society's consciousness. However, all other people are welcome to support the initiative.

### 3. Key facts

The initiative is now registered as an association, but is not a charity and therefore relies on private donations for material and infrastructure costs. However, as the initiative is largely organised via the internet, anyone interested can participate free of charge. The initiative describes itself as fundamentally democratic, and the individual local groups enjoy great freedom of decision. The principle of standing up for a democratic and egalitarian society is central, and the political actions through which this is expressed are left to the local groups themselves. As the initiative is organised almost exclusively through Facebook groups, it is necessary for those interested to be part of these groups. In this way, the initiative brings the older target group into contact with social media, and through their involvement in the initiative, they can experience and learn the benefits and use of social media. In this environment, which consists mainly of peers with common interests, social media can serve as a tool for social and political participation.

### 4. Results

As the initiative is politically motivated, there are also people who do not share the views and basic values of the initiative. Nevertheless, the ratings and feedback on the Facebook page of Omas gegen Rechts are mostly positive and many people thank the initiative for the numerous protests, rallies and dialogues. These take place in both analogue and online formats.

### 5. More information

Website [[omasgegenrechts-deutschland.org](https://omasgegenrechts-deutschland.org)]

Article [[dw.com/en/neo-nazis-face-an-old-enemy-in-grannies-against-the-right](https://www.dw.com/en/neo-nazis-face-an-old-enemy-in-grannies-against-the-right)]

## 2.4.7 CitizenLab: Mitmachen Coburg

Germany

Area covered: Political participation

### 1. Short Description

CitizenLab's digital participation platforms promote digital democracy in local projects covering all policy areas. With the help of CitizenLab, municipalities and other organisations can consult and exchange information with citizens, gather opinions and initiate dialogue. One of the participating municipalities in Germany is the city of Coburg.

### 2. Implementation and objectives

CitizenLab provides municipalities with a toolbox for participation and helps with all aspects of implementation, including strategies for engaging specific target groups. Forms of participation include analogue forms.

The Coburg Mitmachen [participate] platform focuses on climate change and aims to develop a Green Deal Coburg 2030 strategy in a participatory way by the end of 2023. It is intended to be a central hub for exchanging information and receiving input and feedback. Current participation initiatives are displayed on the homepage and registered citizens can participate in various ways. They can add an idea, comment on a proposal, vote on and prioritise projects or take part in a survey. The focus is on climate measures, but the platform also aims to increase the political and social participation of citizens, which is essential for the functioning of democratic processes. In this way, the initiative also strengthens trust in politics and gives citizens the opportunity to actively and directly shape their environment.

In Coburg, citizens of all ages are encouraged to participate. In particular, initiatives dealing with accessibility, mobility and housing will benefit from the contributions of older citizens. The platform also offers a variety of easily accessible environmental education materials. By making this content and political participation accessible in an attractive and user-friendly way, people of all ages will benefit.

### 3. Key facts

The platform is a public offer, supported by the city administration of Coburg and implemented by the private company CitizenLab. It is funded by the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) and foundations.

The platform is free of charge for users, as the main purpose is to facilitate and simplify the exchange of information. However, in order to participate, citizens must register on the website and create a user account. This means that digital literacy and access to the Internet are required for use.

### 4. Results

So far, over 800 citizens of the city of Coburg have registered on the project website, with varying responses to the initiatives and calls for participation. However, some of the initiatives have already been discussed by many users on the platform and the opportunity to participate digitally has been used to shape the projects.

The GreenDeal Coburg 2030 project, which gave rise to the "Mitmachen Coburg" platform, is still being funded until March 2024. However, efforts are already underway to make the funding permanent.

Founded in Belgium in 2015, CitizenLab has been growing ever since and has won several awards. Today, CitizenLab's global team has already supported 400 local governments and organisations in 20 countries (until May 2023).

### 5. More information

Website [[mitmachen.coburg.de](https://mitmachen.coburg.de)]

## 2.5 Recommendations for the DigitalScouts trainings

The trainer and training developer in the regional Di@-Lotsen project described that often training participants expect to get a blueprint to design a learning setting or support offer for senior citizens. She emphasised that it is about enabling participants to find out what suits them, the people they support and the local situation, to try new things, to exchange ideas, to learn from each other and from the experiences of the other participants.

In the Digitaler Engel project it was observed that often people want to help and support others, but do not know how to organise this and what is needed to make it effective. Questions often arise about the structure and organisation of age-appropriate learning opportunities.

The following Digitaler Engel online learning modules are most in demand:

- Teaching digital skills, didactical aspects
- Learning in old age
- Age-appropriate learning environments
- Public relations/participant acquisition

These requirements are largely reflected in the statements of potential learners. Geragogical principles are by far the most frequently mentioned learning contents, e.g. omitting English words, using simple language, figurative language, being able to listen, being open, understanding what the other person actually wants, considering specific problems and challenges and life situations of older people (loneliness, hurdles in using technology) and openness to the respective concrete situations of the learners, speaking slowly and not in English expressions.

These are examples for **contents and specific questions** mentioned by the potential learners, experts and practitioners:

- What technical equipment will I need?
- What funding opportunities are available?
- How does learning in old age work?
- How do I design an appropriate format?
- How do I find local supporters?
- Reducing uncertainty about one's own abilities: Trainers of trainers or supporters stressed that it is important to understand that as a trainer it is ok not to know everything (every product or solution to every problem) and also to be able to articulate this.
- To know where to find appropriate information and training material
- Legal framework: What am I allowed to do? What questions can I answer and to what extent?
- The demand for topics is often based on current news, changes in legislation, etc. (online tax return, electronic patient records, etc.).
- Dissemination and acquisition: E.g. how to promote a learning or support offer for older people? How to address different target groups?

Most **important skills** of digital scouts are:

- Patience
- An empathetic attitude
- The ability to communicate clearly and at eye level
- To be open to new things, e.g. they should also try formats they are not used to
- The ability to deal with heterogeneous groups, learners' frustration and feelings of being overburdened

The last aspect mentioned derives from the challenge for potential digital scouts to deal with the heterogeneity of the target group of people aged 60+, already described in chapter 2.1. This is true both in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and in terms of digital education, as well as in terms of the variety of needs and desires with regard to digital learning topics. This means being able to deal with the fact that people come to (course) offerings with different expectations and prior knowledge and are sometimes frustrated because not all expectations can be met. This learning need was identified by both practitioners and potential scouts. One of the experts interviewed pointed out that no matter how well you target a specific group for a learning opportunity, there will always be participants with different levels of knowledge and expectations.

At the same time, the previous experiences and knowledge of the potential digital scouts are also highly heterogeneous and thus require individually tailored learning units. This is also reflected by the coordinator of the Digitaler Engel project. According to her experience, it is advisable to train volunteers and professionals separately as their needs and expectations vary a lot.

### **Formats and other aspects to be considered**

The learning setting should be designed in a flexible way and fit to the different life structures of the learners. The potential learners stated that they would like to be able to learn flexibly, i.e., regarding time and place. At the same time, the learning units should be rather short and modularly combinable. Learning in between or on the go should be just as possible as learning in longer blocks.

*“I would like to learn online and interactively in a group, because then you could ask questions when you didn't understand something. For complex topics, I can also watch videos and solve tasks, but then I would like to exchange ideas with others so that you don't get stuck alone. And I would like to have opportunities to exchange experiences about the practice.”*

(Kirsten Kelly, learning guide [fragfraukelly.de](https://fragfraukelly.de))

According to practitioners, experts and potential learners, joint, collaborative learning with and from each other is desired. This includes for example the opportunity to teach each other new digital topics was mentioned, e.g. in role plays but also in the exchange of practical experiences made with the target group. Not only should new things be offered to learn, but learning in a group should also enable the repetition and deepening of what has previously been learned in theory.

Another expert coordinating a project at the federal state level emphasised that training for volunteers should not be too extensive and time-consuming. He recommends that an appropriate length of training for volunteers is about 8 hours in total and that it should be as low-threshold as possible.

The potential learners interviewed were very different in terms of the formats they would prefer: Some would prefer face-to-face training, others a blended learning format. Some would like to meet every week or every two weeks, others would prefer a one-day workshop. As a rule, it is recommended by an expert who trains volunteers in a regional project not to have fixed formats, but to be participant-oriented.

What was emphasised by both experts and learners was the need for further training/accompaniment and also the opportunity to expand one's "toolbox" - including inspiring digital tools to explore with the people they support.

Further trainings can include new developments, e.g. one interviewee stated:

*"I would like to learn new things on a regular basis, such as AI topics and applications, then I wouldn't have to look for it all on my own. It would be nice to have courses on current topics, where you can then "spin and play around" with others and try out how to apply them."*

(Kirsten Kelly, learning guide, [fragfraukelly.de](https://fragfraukelly.de))

From regional projects, it was learned to ensure that volunteers are locally connected to an organisation or institution (before the training starts, if feasible).

The smaller and more specific (homogeneous) the groups, the better.

## 2.6 Conclusions

In combination with user-friendly digital tools and individual support if needed, digitalisation has the potential to enable people to improve their quality of life and social participation throughout the day and in all areas of life. Starting with the possibility to have the daily newspaper digitally read to them in the morning, then to consult the doctor with a telemedical application, to learn a language together with others in an online course in the afternoon, to attend a digital concert with family and friends in the evening and to have an app remind them to take their medication before going to bed.<sup>3</sup>

Besides the opportunities, digitalisation also goes along with negative impacts. The fact that the rapid development of newer and newer technologies means that people can quickly feel "left behind" and that analogue alternatives are increasingly disappearing is viewed very critically by most respondents. They stressed that people can only benefit from digitalisation if it fits to their individual needs and interests and are very sensitive to the fact that digitalisation is not an end in itself and should not be imposed.

However, the environment in which everyone lives is changing rapidly and requires greater digital literacy. The continuous acquisition of competences is therefore becoming increasingly important for all age groups. Person-centred support that strengthens the ability to use digital applications and devices enables people to make a meaningful contribution in all areas of their lives. The structures that enable people to acquire these skills need to be as diverse as people of all ages to

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<sup>3</sup> For a „journey“ of digital opportunities through a day [in German language], see: [prezi.com/view/P6pDbmS57GcumKaxWm96](https://prezi.com/view/P6pDbmS57GcumKaxWm96)



ensure that individuals can make a competent, conscious and informed decision for or against the use of a digital tool.

Through the desk research and the guided interviews with practitioners, experts and potential training participants, a number of insights from science and practice as well as from the needs of the target group could be gained, which will be incorporated into the development of the training concept and the creation of a European compendium.

Further, the results of the SIM study, which is representative of German-speaking people aged 60 and over in Germany, showed a very precise and differentiated picture of the indirect target group's use of technology and the barriers that need to be taken into account in technology support.

In addition to the exemplary results presented in the report, a number of other interesting examples of use and tips for individually attractive digital applications have been collected and will continue to be collected, processed and made available to all those interested in digital education and support.

Overall, the results of the desk research show that the training approach and content planned for the DigitalScouts project, as well as the focus on practical applications that can be used individually and in everyday life to support technology, are well suited to the needs of the target group.

When developing the curriculum, it is important to consider how to successfully focus on the needs of different groups (especially volunteers and paid staff). In addition to the planned content, the issues of internet safety, data protection and the fears and insecurities of inexperienced users should become an integral part of the Digital Scouts training.

## 2.7 Testimonials of interviewees

*“Senior citizens should have the right to have well-trained people to support them in expanding their digital participation. For this to happen, trainers must also have the opportunity to take part in training on an ongoing basis.”*

*(Anne Schmitt, Institut für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikation Hessen e.V.)*

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*“Regular training to get inspiration for future topics and to widen the method box is important for those who impart digital knowledge to older people.”*

*(Anne Schmitt, Institut für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikation Hessen e.V.)*

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*“For me, digital participation means not being left behind and being aware of what is important. It's nice to have inspiring offers that help me to live my life.”*

*(Stefanie Zimmermann, Wiesbaden Seniors' Council)*

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*“I think it is important that there are many options [for digital literacy training for older people], even if they cover similar topics. Because the target group is very diverse, the training offers and materials must also be diverse. So it is important that there is no competition between them.”*

*(Katharina Kunze, coor, Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V., project manager Digitaler Engel)*

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## Annex: Lead questions used in guided interviews

1. Do you think digital participation of older citizens is important? Why?
2. Which barriers do you know that prevent older citizens from digital participation?
3. Which support structures and learning offers for older people in using ICT do you know?
4. Do you think there is a need to expand these support/learning offers? If so: Why? Which kind of offers are not available? What is missing in the current offers?
5. Do you think there is [also] a need to train people to support/train older people using ICT? If so: Why?
6. Which opportunities/offers are available [do you know] to be trained themselves (as trainers) in [country/region]?
7. Is there a need to expand these offers [trainings for trainers/supporters]? If so: Why? Which kind of offers are not available? What is missing in the current offers?
8. What are trainers for digital education of older people keen to learn? [Potential learners: What would you like to learn to be able to support/train older people?]
9. What are the most important skills/knowledge for supporters?
10. From your personal point of view, which skills/knowledge do the (potential) trainers/you lack?
11. In addition to contents, which format is attractive (duration, online/on-site/ ...) for you/trainers on digital skills?
12. Can you also recommend methods/media to be included in training offers for trainers?
13. Which examples of opportunities interesting for/targeted at older people in the digital area do you know, covering one of the following areas: health promotion, social participation, cultural participation, political participation/municipal services?