



Digitalization and its impact on the human and digital rights of older people in the EU

The Digital Divide and Older People

- **Digitalization** has become an essential part of our lives from making phone calls to accessing healthcare services.
 - For example: banking; making appointments with public offices and authorities, doctors, etc.
- However, many older people face a "digital exclusion"— that is, they may have less or no access to these technologies, understand them less well or have problems using them.



Why?

- Income: Some older people may not be able to afford internet access or smartphones.
- Education: People who didn't use computers in their jobs may find it harder to adapt to new technologies.
- **Health:** Vision or mobility issues can make it harder to use devices like smartphones or tablets.
- Conscious decision for fear of data theft, surveillance.

Example: Imagine someone who has never used a smartphone – learning to use it at an older age can feel overwhelming.



Digital Literacy vs. Digital Proficiency

- **Digital literacy** is about *understanding* and *navigating* digital environments knowing *what* digital tools are, *how* they work, and being aware of things like online safety, privacy, and information credibility.
- **Digital proficiency** goes a step further it means being able to *apply* those digital skills *confidently* and *independently* in real-life contexts, like managing online banking, using telehealth services, or communicating via apps.

In short:

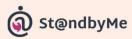
Digital literacy is *knowing how*, while **Digital proficiency** is *being able and confident to do*.





Why Digital Literacy Matters

- Builds foundational understanding of digital tools and environments
- Increases awareness of online safety, privacy, and data protection
- Helps older people recognize trustworthy information and avoid digital scams
- Reduces anxiety and fear around using technology
- Enables informed choices in an increasingly digital society



Why Digital Proficiency Matters

- Empowers independent access to essential services (e.g., healthcare, banking, communication)
- Promotes social inclusion and reduces isolation
- Supports active participation in digital public life
- Enhances confidence and autonomy in daily digital tasks
- Protects human rights in a digital age (e.g., access, freedom of expression, privacy)





Human Rights in the Digital Age

- You may be wondering: What do human rights have to do with digitalization?
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) ensures basic rights like the right to freedom of expression, education and access to information.
 - But this was written before the internet existed.
 - Today, access to the internet is increasingly seen as a human right because so much of our life depends on it.



The Role of Social/Local Policy

- Social policies play a key role in ensuring older people are not left behind in the digital world.
 - Governments can promote digital inclusion by providing affordable access to the internet and training programs, such as freely accessible computers in public institutions.
 - Example: In Sweden, public libraries offer digital training for older people.



What Does This Mean for You?

- Access and Affordability: Everyone should be able to afford an internet connection and digital devices.
 - This could be supported by government policies or community programs, like those seen in Sweden, where libraries help people learn how to use technology.
- Digital Literacy: older people should have the opportunity to learn how to use technology.
 - In some countries, NGOs are working to close this gap. The
 "Digitalpakt Alter" and the "Digital Kompass" in Germany, for example, help older people to access and use digital services.





EU Digital Rights and Principles

- The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles is a guide to ensure everyone in the EU can fully participate in the digital world.
 - o These principles emphasize:
 - Access to the internet for all.
 - Privacy and protection from online risks like surveillance or fraud.
 - Ensuring everyone, regardless of age, can learn digital skills.
- While not legally binding yet, these principles aim to ensure that older people are included in this digital world.



Challenges Older People Face in the Digital World

- **Health issues** can make technology difficult to use (e.g., poor eyesight, hearing impairment, arthritis, mobility restrictions).
- Insufficient digital media equipment in public buildings.
- Ageism in Technology Design: Many devices and apps are not made with older users in mind, making them hard to navigate.
 - This can discourage older people from trying to learn.





Digital Rights as Human Rights

- As the world becomes more digital, ensuring fair access to the internet and digital services is becoming a part of human rights.
 - Think about the right to education—in the digital age, this includes the right to learn how to use technology.
 - The right to privacy now includes online privacy, like protecting your personal information from fraud or identity theft.



The Right to Stay Analog in a Digital World

- Human rights also protect what the law doesn't (yet).
- You have the right to stay analog—to access services in non-digital ways.
- EU's human rights agency (FRA) says older people should choose how they access services.
- But: learning digital skills is still important—to stay included, connected, and independent.





How You Can Get Involved

- Lifelong Learning: If you are not comfortable using technology, it's never too late to learn.
 - There are many community programs, NGOs, and online courses aimed at helping older people become more digitally literate.
- Advocacy: You can help push for better digital rights for older people by getting involved in local or national groups that focus on senior citizens' issues.



Conclusion

- **Digitalization** affects all of us, regardless of age.
- The EU is working to ensure that digital rights are considered human rights, and that **everyone**, including older people, has access to the digital world.
- Your voice and participation in this digital world matter—whether it's by advocating for better policies or learning new digital skills.



Q&A

