

Training Context Presentation Notes

1. On behalf of my partners in the St@ndbyMe project and myself, I welcome you to today's presentation. I am Steven McAvinue from Café Anschluss at the Frankfurter Verband in Frankfurt, Germany. Today, we will explore how digitalization intersects with the rights and lives of older adults in the EU. This talk is based on the findings of the St@ndbyMe project, which takes a "Digital Rights" approach to inclusion.

2. Digitalization has become an integral part of our daily lives – from online banking to booking appointments to accessing healthcare services. However, many older people are left out – not necessarily due to unwillingness, but for other reasons. But what are the reasons?

3. There can be various barriers – for instance, low income, which particularly affects women who were primarily responsible for family and household work and therefore receive little or no pension or social benefits. A lack of education or training in how to use digital devices and media also plays a role. Health issues such as poor eyesight or arthritis can make use even more difficult. Some people also deliberately choose not to use digital services – out of fear of data theft or concerns about privacy.

None of these are personal failings but rather signs of systemic problems.

4. To be clear: Digital literacy means understanding how digital tools work and knowing how to use them safely. Digital competence means being able to use them confidently in everyday life – for banking, telemedicine, or staying in touch with family.

5. Digital literacy is the foundation. It builds trust, increases safety, and helps older people avoid scams. More importantly, it promotes independence and informed decision-making in our digital society.

6. Competence empowers. It enables older people to access vital services, increases their autonomy, and fosters social inclusion. It also directly supports human rights – freedom of information, participation, and self-determination.

7. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights didn't foresee the internet. But today, digital access is crucial for exercising rights – freedom of expression, education, and participation. If digital access is denied, there is a risk that these rights are denied too.

8. Governments and communities must take action. Examples like Sweden's digital training through public libraries or the *DigitalPakt Alter* in Germany show how targeted support can help older people bridge the digital divide.

9. We all have a role to play: we must advocate for affordable internet, support training programs, and ensure devices and public spaces are inclusive. Community-based models like intergenerational training can have a big impact.

10. The EU Declaration on Digital Rights emphasizes universal internet access, privacy protection, and digital learning for all. While not yet law, it offers a vision for an inclusive digital future.

11. Beyond affordability, older people also struggle with device design, health limitations, and inadequate support from public services. Technology must be age-friendly – it's about dignity and usability.

12. Digital rights are human rights. Access, safety, autonomy – all these now take place in digital environments. Without inclusion, older adults are excluded from society.

13. Here's something important: not everything is written in law – but that doesn't mean it isn't a right. Human rights empower us to fight for justice, even when there are no rules yet.

This includes:

- The right to access public services offline, not just online.
- The right to safety and support in digital environments.
- The right to education – to learn how to use technology, or not, if that's your choice.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) recommends that older adults should have a choice: to use digital services – or to stick with in-person options if that feels more comfortable. That is the right to remain analog.

At the same time, we encourage digital education – because even if you don't want to use the internet every day, a basic understanding helps protect your independence and rights. And because the “digital revolution” – like the industrial revolution before – is moving forward, whether we want it or not. That increases the risk of social exclusion.

14. Join a digital class, help older relatives with their devices, or support NGOs and other organizations that teach digital skills to older people.

Support local programs. Your voice contributes to a digitally inclusive society.

15. Digitalization will not remain optional – it is everywhere. Let us ensure that everyone, regardless of age, is included. Thank you.

We now have some time for your questions. Afterwards, we'd be grateful if you could fill out the questionnaire about this presentation.