Enhancing the Social and Digital Participation of Older People

O1: Fact Sheet

National report for Germany

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1. Introduction

The demographic development calls for measures to enable older people to live autonomously and shape living environments in a way that their independence and the social participation is supported. Simultaneously, the transformative power of digitalisation is visible in almost every field of our society. The speed of digital development is going that fast that even younger seniors cannot keep up the pace. New knowledge and skills are needed to be able to fully participate in society. It is highly important that we reduce the digital gap that divides certain groups (e.g. older people) from those with full access to the digital world. The Bridge the Gap! project aims to create age-friendly neighbourhoods and reduce the digital divide between generations by developing trainings that empower and train older people to explore, analyse and (re)shape their neighbourhoods with the help of digital tools.

The Intellectual Output of the research phase is the Bridge the Gap! Fact Sheet. It is a basis for the partnership as regards content as well as for the promotion, dissemination and implementation of the project. The Bridge the Gap! Fact Sheet aims to inform about the subject older people in the digital era as well as interesting best-practice examples of participation in older age – with a focus on age-friendly environments and ICT. This national report for Germany describes the research activities and summarises the main findings to be included in the Bridge the Gap! Fact Sheet, as well as fruitful training settings and content for the development of the training.

2. Methodology and proceedings

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the following methods were applied:

- Desk research in each country concerning approaches to age-friendly environments, perspectives on the topic “digitalisation and demography”, best-practice examples as well as training settings and contents.
- Interviews in each partner country with stakeholders, experts and representatives of the target group for the training.

The desk research focused on the following issues:

- Political and practical approaches to age-friendly environments (at national, regional and local level)
- Policies and strategies regarding digitalisation and demography (at national, regional and local level)
- Facts and figures related to digitalisation and demography
- Best-practice examples in co-producing age-friendly environments with the facilitation of digital means

Lead questions for interviews with experts and stakeholders as well as for potential training participants ("learners") were agreed upon in the kick-off meeting (see Annex 1 and Annex 2). Regarding the experts, the interview questions have been adapted to the functions, expertise and personal background of the interviewees.

In Germany, two group interviews with three or four participants and six individual interviews took place (13 interviewees in total). Due to the restrictions imposed by the Corona pandemic, no face-to-face interviews could be conducted. Three people were interviewed by telephone, nine in online video conferences and one interviewee preferred to write down her answers.

Three women and two men were interviewed by using the lead questions for potential learners. The age of the potential learners ranges from 64 to 86 years (average 70,6 years). The educational level of these interviewees ranges from 3 to 7 on the ISCED 2011 scale. All learners interviewed have already participated in projects to create age-friendly environments, four of them in the EU project Mobility Scouts and/or AFE Activists.

Three women and five men were interviewed as stakeholders or experts. Two of them are representatives of local authorities; further this group embraced one coordinator of training for digital literacy for older citizens, three volunteers working towards an age-friendly environment, and two digital literacy training providers.

Some of the experts were interested in participating in the trainings, some of the potential learners are also members of the Senior Citizens' Council Hanau and actively committed to the interests of older people. Another potential learner is a member of the parliaments at municipal and district level.

3. Research results

3.1 Political and practical approaches to age-friendly environments

"Age-friendly environments foster health and well-being and the participation of people as they age. They are accessible, equitable, inclusive, safe and secure, and supportive. They promote health and prevent or delay the onset of disease and functional decline." (WHO 2021)

Our health and well-being are significantly influenced by the environment in which we live. For this reason, the concept of age-friendly environments was developed by the WHO in 2007. Since then, the WHO has been promoting the creation of age-friendly environments with a focus on cities and communities. Age-friendly environments combat ageism and promote the independence, social participation and well-being of older people (WHO 2021).

In 2016, the North Rhine-Westphalian city Radevormwald became the first and only German city to join the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities. Together with the supporting association aktiv55plus, the residents of Radevormwald are supported in leading an active life. To create an age-friendly environment for all, the municipality has created new seating facilities, improved

the accessibility and introduced a citizens' bus (Gilsbach, 2019). In addition, the aktiv55plus association offers a shopping service, arranges for mutual support and offers counselling and advice on various topics for older people (aktiv55plus, 2021).

The efforts of the Green Party in Hamburg to become a member of the age-friendly cities network could not be pursued within the existing coalition. Nevertheless, the governing parties after the 2020 election have set out comprehensive programmes and structures in their coalition agreement aimed at developing an age-friendly city (GRÜNE 60PLUS, 2020). One of the goals is to network and share ideas with other large cities. It is planned to further develop the demography into a neighbourhood-oriented action plan, guided by the WHO age-friendly city approach. The focus of local actions is on barrier-free housing and mobility, local supply as well as health and nursing care in the local districts. Also, online platforms and meeting points in the local districts contribute to better networking of neighbourhood initiatives are planned.

The project "Age-Friendly Communities Elbe-Elster" is carried out since 2019 in cooperation with the Technical University Cottbus Senftenberg and the district of Elbe-Elster (Altersfreundliche Gemeinde, 2021). Three municipalities in the district of North Saxony are also involved in the project. The project is encouraging young and older people to help shape their community in an age-friendly way. On the basis of social space analyses, sustainable packages of measures were developed for the respective communities. The following step will be to expand the mobility services in the participating municipalities (Altersfreundliche Gemeinde, 2021). For example, in the municipality of Schlieben, it is planned to re-equip the pavements and to set up a sales island where mobile service providers, bakers and other food suppliers will offer their services and products.

In addition to the age-friendly approaches described above, Senior Citizens' Councils are worth mentioning here, as they are a pillar of interest representation for older people in Germany. With about 1.000 local Senior Citizens' Councils, they are considered to belong to the most important partners and driving forces for initiatives and projects for older people (BAG LSV e.V., 2021). Senior Citizens' Councils have existed in Germany for 50 years. They are active at local, regional or national level, acting as an advisory body and representing the interests of the older generations in the political process (Olk, 2009). Senior Counsellors actively participate in decision-making processes on public issues in their communities and address broader community issues and challenges beyond their own concerns. The councils focus on issues such as housing for older people, senior-friendly environments and accessibility in the cities. They also contribute to a positive image of old age. Due to their good networking with local authorities, administrations, institutions, associations and neighbourhood initiatives, they are also considered important partners for practitioners.

An age-friendly approach at national level is the action plan "IN FORM - Germany's Initiative for Healthy Nutrition and More Physical Activity", developed in 2008 by the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL/BMG, 2021). The aim of this initiative is to improve nutrition and physical activity behaviour in Germany. In addition, access to health-

promoting offers is to be facilitated. A healthier lifestyle is intended to increase the quality of life and enjoyment of life, which can bring about positive changes in people's lives. Within the framework of IN FORM, about 100 projects for healthy nutrition and more physical activity were supported (BMEL/BMG, 2021). The federal states and municipalities were actively involved in the creation of the action plan and are accompanying the process.

Examples of IN FORM-funded projects

Within the framework of the IN FORM action plan, "Centres for Physical Activity Promotion" have been established in each federal state to promote sustainable health promotion (BMEL/BMG, 2021). Through the establishment of these centres, access to physical activity programmes is facilitated. The programmes are to be geared to the needs of the target group and social isolation among older people is to be prevented.

With the support of the IN FORM action plan, the Academy of the German Gymnastics Federation (DTB) offers further training to become a DTB movement expert. The training addresses the needs of stationary and ambulant care facilities and is aimed at people who work in the care sector. The learning content of the training includes for example "socialising through simple dances" or "brain training through movement" (DTB-Akademie, 2021). With the help of this further training, nursing staff are enabled to promote the mobility of people in need of care. In addition, joy of life, social interaction and independence of the residents are strengthened.

3.2 Findings on digitalisation and demography

3.2.1 Status quo of demography and digitalisation

Digitalisation as a social transformation process affects all areas of people's lives and encompasses society as a whole (BMFSFJ 2020a). The Expert Commission of the Eighth Government Report on Older People (see section 3.2.3) emphasises that linkages between the digital and demographic change must be considered. The goal should be to create a liveable digital society for all generations. The manifold interactions between the megatrend of digitalisation and the lives of older people is considered to have been given to date been far too little attention and consideration in the general debate on digitalisation as well as in concrete political strategies for shaping digitalisation (BMFSFJ 2020a).

Based on data from the German Ageing Survey from 2017, the Eighth Government Report on Older People shows that over 80% of the people in the phase around retirement (60-72 years) have access to the internet. However, in the higher age groups, the proportion of those who have access to the internet decreases significantly (73-78 years: 64,4%; 79-84 years: 39,4%). This also means that the prerequisite for using the benefits of the internet (see section 3.2.4) is met by a smaller proportion of people in higher age groups (BMFSFJ 2020a). A recent study performed among the German-speaking resident population indicates that internet use in the 70+ age group increased during the COVID-19 pandemic by 17 percentage points compared to 2019 and is now at 75% (Beisch and Schäfer, 2020). It is not yet possible to predict whether those who discovered

internet use as a result of the pandemic will also apply it in the future. However, the authors also show that the age groups are becoming more and more similar in terms of internet access over time.

In addition to access to the internet, digital skills are also a prerequisite for benefiting from the opportunities of digitalisation. The table below illustrates the digital skills in the 65-74 age group compared to all age groups. The values for all EU countries at the time of data collection are shown in brackets for comparison. About half of those who had used the internet in the last three months at the time of the survey had basic or higher digital skills. The proportion is almost twice as high across all age groups. The difference is even more serious, however, if one looks at those who were not online at all during the period under consideration. This indicates, at least for 2019, that older people do not use the possibilities of the internet to the same extent as younger people. There is no data available for Germany for the age group over 74.

Level of digital skills: Percentage of individuals in Germany (EU 28), year 2019

Level of digital skills[1]	**All age groups**	**Age group 65-74**
The digital skills could not be assessed because individuals have not used the internet in the last 3 months	7 (13)	28 (39)
No overall digital skills	0 (1)	1 (2)
Low overall digital skills	22 (28)	36 (32)
Basic overall digital skills	31 (25)	26 (19)
Above basic overall digital skills	39 (33)	10 (8)

Source: Eurostat (2021)

Not only knowledge of how to operate technical devices is a prerequisite for their use but "digital change requires the ability to orient oneself and shape one's environment, and a willingness to engage in lifelong learning" (Stubbe, Schaat and Ehrenberg-Silies, 2019, p.10). This refers, for example, to "competences that strengthen orientation in the digital transformation of areas of life, including a general understanding of technology, knowledge about the implications of data exchange and digital democracy, or the assertion of digital rights" (Stubbe, Schaat and Ehrenberg-Silies, 2019, p.41). These competences will gain more and more importance in the future.

3.2.2 Areas of application of ICT by older citizens

With regard to the use of digital devices and platforms, it is difficult to find reliable data for different age groups.

[1] Digital skills indicators are based on activities in four areas: information, communication, problem solving and software skills. Further information: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/tepsr_sp410_esmsip2.htm

Of those who use the internet for private purposes, 81% of persons aged 65 or older say they had used it to search for goods or services. 48% of these internet users use online banking, 18% are active in social networks. About 58% of the group aged 65 or older said they use messenger such as WhatsApp, Skype, etc. in the last three months. Only 23% of them uploaded or shared content on a website in this period of time. 70% of those aged 65 or older use the Internet on a daily or nearly daily basis (Destatis, 2021).

In its Consumer Study, the GfK Association observed in particular the growth in smartphone use by people in the age group 60+. Among those who use the internet, smartphone use has increased from 17% in 2016 to 69% in 2018 (GfK Verein, 2018).

In the representative ARD/ZDF Online Study 2020, not only the aforementioned sharp increase in internet use of older people in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic was observed. At least once a week, 75% of the 50-69 age group use messenger services such as WhatsApp (70+: 47%), 69% use search engines (70+: 48%), 64% read and write e-mails (70+: 48%) and 19% are active in online networks (70+: 5%) (Beisch and Schäfer, 2020).

3.2.3 Policies regarding digitalisation and demography

German Digitalisation Implementation Strategy (national level)

The aim of the German Digitalisation Implementation Strategy is defined as follows: "The goal is to further increase the quality of life for all people in Germany, to develop the economic and ecological potentials and to secure social cohesion" (Die Bundesregierung, 2020). The strategy consists of five fields of action:

- Digital competence
- Infrastructure and equipment
- Innovation and digital transformation
- Society in the digital transformation
- Modern State

As part of the implementation strategy, the service point "Digitalisation and Education for Older People" was established. The website wissensdurstig.de presents good practice examples, literature, events and digital training offers for older people.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is currently funding the “Digitaler Engel” project, which aims to answer older people's questions about digitalisation in a practical and personal way. The aim of the project is to make digital participation sustainable and to reach as many people as possible with a mobile advice team. By June 2022, the mobile advice team will be on the road and will stop at more than 150 stations.

Government Report on Older People (national level)

Since 1993, a Government Report on Older People has been published in every legislative period of the German Federal Parliament. Each of the reports is dedicated to specific senior policy topic and serves as an important basis for decision-making on senior policy (BMFSFJ, 2020b). The Reports on Older People are funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ, 2020b). The reports are adopted by the Federal Cabinet and subsequently forwarded to the German Parliament (BMFSFJ, 2020b). A competent expert commission is elected for each report. The commission is composed of independent scientists from various disciplines, such as psychology, gerontology, social sciences, nursing sciences and IT. After the expert commission has intensively dealt with the given senior policy topic for a period of about two years, a statement of the Federal Government is attached to the report.

The Eighth Government Report on Older People was published in 2020 and deals with digitalisation and its consequences for life in old age. The topic was chosen because digitalisation is one of the central developments of our time and technical products are becoming increasingly important in many areas of life (BMFSFJ, 2021).

Cognitive Village, Elsoff (local level)

There is no nationwide access to a fast internet connection in Germany and the rural regions are often considered to be digitally excluded (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2021). The "Smart Country" programme, initiated by the Bertelsmann Foundation, aims to overcome the unequal distribution of opportunities between urban and non-urban areas and to support villages in understanding the digitalisation as an opportunity to shape demographic challenges and keep regions attractive. Within the framework of this project, several initiatives and projects in rural areas were supported, for example, the "Cognitve Village" project in Elsoff. In a pilot project from 2015-2018, the village of 700 inhabitants got a new village café corner with an exchange platform on a public display, an intelligent gym floor in their community centre, live stream to the church and an offer to older people to participate in workshops about digital tools (Wahl, 2021).

Older people living in Elsoff were actively involved in the process. As a basis for the joint work, fortnightly meetings were held with three groups in the respective residential quarters. It was helpful to create a pleasant atmosphere with coffee and cake to ensure an easy access to digital technologies (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019). Older people could decide for themselves which digital media and tools they wanted to learn more about. In the workshops, the participants could try out different applications on tablets. The interest and knowledge of the older people was thus strengthened, and they could later benefit from the newly created digital possibilities in their community. They also have the opportunity to borrow a tablet in the village shop or are able to do sports together in the community centre on an intelligent gym floor and can see their fitness progress on a screen (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2021).

3.2.4 Benefits and challenges of the digitalisation for older citizens

Social participation / integration

Digital technologies can support the quality of life, autonomy, participation and well-being of older people. The social networks and interests of older people can be expanded through the use of technology. They can also create new opportunities for shaping everyday life and living. So-called digital participation can partially compensate for sensory, motor and cognitive losses and thus complement aspects of physical participation, which can counteract loneliness and social isolation.

Social participation is nowadays closely linked to digital tools. Competent use of technology is therefore understood as an essential prerequisite for social participation (BMFSFJ, 2020a). According to Peilzäus-Hoffmeister (2013), digitalisation can be understood as a "new determinant of social inequality"(p.154) if certain groups in society do not have access or are not given the prerequisites for using digital technologies.

Housing

One's own home is of particular importance for older people. The increased use of digital technologies could promote independent living and the maintenance of social participation for older people. But it should be noted that there are not enough studies on the benefits of smart home systems, for example, to provide valid evidence for the promotion of independent living at home through technical assistance systems (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

However, the necessary retrofitting of existing homes or the equipping of new buildings with smart systems and technical assistance systems are only being implemented hesitantly (Eberhardt, 2020). In Germany, about 3.000 fully networked smart flats are occupied by older people, with an estimated higher number for owner-occupied flats (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

Robotic assistants etc. can promote independent living and support outpatient care. Acceptance of technical assistance systems is relatively high among the older population. A representative survey commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research already showed in 2016 that 82 percent of older people (60 years and older) could in principle imagine using a service robot at home if it meant they could stay in their own homes (BMFSFJ, 2020a). In particular, if the technical assistance systems entail avoiding a move to a care home, there is great acceptance and interest on the part of older people (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

The Expert Commission of the Eighth Government Report on Older People points out that the active participation of older people plays a central role in the technical upgrading of housing (BMFSFJ, 2020a). Landlords, housing companies and other stakeholders should adapt the functions to the individual needs of older people.

When it comes to technical upgrades and the implementation of digital technology in housing, it has to be considered, however, that the initial installation is not enough but that long-term service is needed (BMFSFJ, 2020a). Moreover, data security and privacy are particularly important for smart home systems as the systems represent an area of attack for hackers.

Mobility

In addition to housing, maintaining mobility is one of the most important needs of older people (BMFSFJ, 2020a). Mobility influences many aspects of quality of life and social participation. With increasing age, however, individual mobility is threatened by arthropathies with increasing age.

Tracking systems or intermodular mobility platforms offering carpooling or technological innovations such as smart wheelchairs or even e-bikes can counteract threats to individual mobility and improve their quality of life. Especially through the constant use of e-bikes, a general openness of older people towards technological innovations became clear.

Care and health

Currently, 3.4 million people in Germany are in need of care by the definition of SGB XI (BMFSF, 2020a). Around three quarters of these are cared for at home. It can be assumed that the demographic-epidemiological challenges will hardly be met in the future by family-based and professional supplementary care networks (BMFSF, 2020a). Here, digital technologies for care can mean relief and support for all parties concerned. Digitalisation offers the potential to improve support systems and to better network informal and professional care and to improve cross-sectoral management and care. Assistive technologies, service or emotional robotics, smart home applications, games for health applications as well as care and health apps provide opportunities to maintain self-sufficiency for longer, even in a preventive way, and to experience cognitive, emotional and physical stimulation and activation. Video consultations or telemonitoring applications such as for monitoring and digital measuring of heart functions can support older people, help to improve therapy monitoring and avoid unnecessary trips to doctor (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

As noted by Stubbe, Schaat and Ehrenberg-Silies (2019), personal assistance systems, smart home and e-health applications are relevant technologies for older people that will develop their potential through the future expansion of AI. Since these systems rely on data and their processes are difficult to comprehend for users, the framework conditions must be designed in a way that the availability of data and the societal needs for security and sovereignty are reconciled.

Smart neighbourhoods

For many people, their neighbourhood is not only the place where they live, but also the place for social exchange and social participation. However, current social and demographic changes are increasingly accompanied by concerns and a growing socio-spatial and social divide (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

In order to maintain and promote the quality of life and autonomy of older people, digitalisation concepts for urban and rural social spaces offer the opportunity to make neighbourhoods attractive as innovative socio-technical arrangements for their residents. With the help of neighbourhood apps as well as networking and service offerings, holistic development concepts such as Smart City or Smart Country aim to create an age-friendly environment for all residents and connect public services with private ones. Many of these applications require internet access,

a stable internet connection and digital skills, and often the necessary technical infrastructure is not available in rural regions. Only 36% of households in rural areas have broadband connections with at least 50 mbit/s available (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

In addition to that, holistic digitalisation concepts in neighbourhoods are often only realised in the context of research and pilot projects and thus have a small outreach. Wiechmann and Terfrüchte (2017) emphasise that decision-makers from politics, administration, business, science and civil society have a responsibility to develop and implement region-specific strategies and to promote the development of digital and age-friendly environments.

Interview results

Those interviewed in the context of this project particularly emphasised the communication possibilities by means of digital services. In particular, the possibility of exchanges using video conferencing software was highlighted as very positive by the interviewees – especially in the context of the severely limited possibilities for personal contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, digital communication is considered more convenient compared to face-to-face communication, which requires a certain degree of mobility to meet. Overall, digital tools enable more flexible, faster and more convenient communication.

According to the interviewees, the internet plays an important role as an information medium for older people. It offers an "unrestricted view of the world" and is "more up-to-date than any encyclopaedia" (learner, 68 years).

The interviewees also frequently mentioned leisure time activities (digital photography, image editing and archiving, listening to music, finding recipes, planning trips, online games (brain jogging)). In this context, it was noted that digital tools have the potential to increase creativity.

According to the interviewees, other benefits of digitalisation for older people are:

- Smart living and voice-controlled assistance systems
- Online shopping
- Education (e.g. learning a foreign language)
- Cheap and clear banking
- Tax return
- Networking in the neighbourhood, finding people with the same interests, planning joint activities
- Participation in advocacy despite pandemic
- Use of online portals for neighbourhood assistance
- Telemedicine / online consultation with a doctor, online counselling services

Above all, fears of older people were mentioned as regards certain challenges: Often older people are afraid of malware, harmful radiation, fraud or hidden costs or the security of their

data. However, concerns were also expressed about doing something wrong or not being competent enough or to embarrass oneself, e.g. when pronouncing English terms. In addition, it can frustrate people if something does not work as desired or takes a long time, especially if there is no one to support them if they have a problem.

The complexity of the information that can be accessed on the internet and financial barriers to purchasing digital devices were also mentioned.

3.2.5 Consequences of the digital divide

Digital divide occurs when specific groups in society do not have access to and competence in using digital technology and are excluded from having access to digital technology. The digital divide is related to social inequality, which exists between social groups from different educational and social strata and regional differences (BMFSFJ, 2020a). This divide is particularly evident between young and old and is reinforced by other aspects of social inequality (Doh, 2020). For example, the level of education is of great importance in the use of the internet and can reinforce age differences (BMFSFJ, 2020a). The employment biography plays a major role here; for example, older women have more often worked in jobs that are less technology-related and usually have a lower pension. Financial resources are also crucial for technology use, as the acquisition costs of digital technologies as well as the expenses for educational opportunities represent an additional barrier to access. As a result, there is a gender difference in the use of digital technologies and digital participation especially among older people (BMFSFJ, 2020a).

The authors of the study "Municipal Innovation - Age-Friendliness in Times of the Corona Pandemic" see the digital competence of older people as an important task for the future, as this is of great importance for the possibilities of digital communication, especially in times of a pandemic (Körber Stiftung, 2020).

Frequently, those interviewed in the project said that those who do not have digital skills are left behind, because they cannot take advantage of the benefits mentioned above. Moreover, digital competences are often required in everyday life, e.g. when making vaccination appointments (telephone appointments were usually overloaded in the initial phase of COVID-19 vaccinations in Germany), tax returns or complaints, which can sometimes only be handled online. If accessibility by email or internet use is required, everyone without digital connection either has no access to services or is dependent on the support of others. Digital illiteracy may also have the consequence that older people, if not familiar with internet media, are taken less seriously by younger people.

Regarding the consequences of the digital divide, two interviewees noted that in the discourse on digitalisation, the expectation of having to develop digital skills should be critically scrutinised and analogue alternatives should always be available. Hence overcoming the digital divide can be considered a societal task, as it "also affects those who would subjectively prefer an analogue lifestyle but would be excluded from social participation without digital skills" (Stubbe, Schaat and Ehrenberg-Silies, 2019, p. 18).

3.3 Best practice examples of co-producing age-friendly environments with the facilitation of digital tools

3.3.1 SeniorenNetz, Märkisches Viertel, Berlin

Objectives

The SeniorenNetz is an information portal and interaction network, initiated as a pilot project by pensioner Mariane Grabowsky in 2017 and built together with senior citizens. Mariane Grabowsky thought it was a shame that many older people do not use the internet and thus missed out on many benefits of digital technologies (Berliner Abendblatt, 2017).

Key facts

The project initiators are the association Netzwerk Märkisches Viertel and its active senior citizens together with GESOBAU AG. The project is carried out in cooperation with the design collective “place/making”, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the AWO Berlin (Netzwerk Märkisches Viertel, 2018).

Mariane Grabowsky summarises the special features of the project in an interview: "The special thing about our project is that it was developed by seniors for seniors. We perform the editing of our website ourselves and develop it with everyday tips into an information portal for older people in the district Märkisches Viertel. The digital platform is not only an information network, but also an occasion for personal contacts" (Grabowsky 2017, quoted in Bartylla 2017).

Implementation

The online platform (http://www.seniorennetz.berlin) lists relevant offers and information for older people in the district. This way, older people stay informed about cultural and sports offers, senior citizens' meetings and services. For people who do not have internet or a personal computer at home, two information pillars with integrated tablets and printers have been set up in the district (Bürgel, 2020). Here, people can access the information portal and print out relevant offers. In addition to the information portal, courses are offered by, with and for senior citizens. The course "Cyber Seniors" aims to reduce fears and to teach older people digital skills and motivate them to participate digitally (Netzwerk Märkisches Viertel, 2018). For this course, the design collective “place/making” has purchased tablets. The courses last three months, and the participants learn to use devices such as smartphones or tablets independently and get to know functions such as e-mail, Google, Skype and Facebook.

The project combines different approaches and links different stakeholders. The connection of digital and analogue offers is important to the project. The digital tool is intended to promote more local encounters, more independence and social exchange. Through their initiative, older people should be made more visible and their needs perceived (Bürgel, 2020).

Results

In 2017, the SeniorenNetz won the Golden Internet Award. After the pilot project was very successful, the project is now being continued and redesigned (Bürgel, 2020). The Lotto Foundation provides funding for three years (Bürgel, 2020). The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports the project togehter the AWO Berlin.

More information

https://www.seniorennetz.berlin
https://www.netzwerkmv.de/index.php?id=82
https://www.gesobau.de/pressemitteilung/seniorennetz-das-altersfreundliche-informationsportal-ist-in-der-auswahl-zum-deutschen-engagement.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYkJO9zKKmE

3.3.2 Oll Inklusiv, Hamburg

Objectives

“Oll Inklusiv” [“oll” means “old” in regional dialect in northern Germany] stands up for age diversity and demand that senior citizens can be loud, colourful, critical and active (Oll Inklusiv, 2021). They offer scope for different topics and want to activate older people.

Key facts

The culture and music manager Mitra Kassai founded the non-profit initiative "Oll Inklusiv" in 2017 (Bargel, 2019). Together with about 30 volunteers, Mitra Kassai has been organising diverse excursions in Hamburg for older people, or "seniors and senioritas" as she calls people aged 60 or above.

The initiative is financed through donations and crowdfunding. In addition, the initiative is repeatedly supported by musicians, radio stations, artists and other stakeholders.

Implementation

Oll Inklusiv is a “vibrant” network that promotes a positive image of old age. With their pro-age approach, they fight against stereotypes and want to strengthen the quality of life as well as the community of older people. In recent years, there have been trips to clubs, the cinema, readings, a visit to a festival and other activities. Food and suitable music for dancing are always provided. The initiative makes sure that the venues are barrier-free, and the excursions and activities are always free of charge, including free water and cookies (Oll Inklusiv, 2021). To ensure easy access to the offers, no registration is required, and everyone can come and go as they please.

The initiative's internet presence is appropriately modern, colourful, active and diverse. They are represented on all important platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Its homepage is clear and gives a good overview of all its actions. In addition, the initiative has its own podcast, which is available on platforms such as Spotify. For the use of digital media and their digital offers, explanatory videos are always linked and available on their YouTube channel.

Results

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, “Oll Inklusiv” has adapted its programme and launched its own app in summer 2020 with the financial support of the IT portal Stifter-helfen (Oll Inklusiv, 2020). An instructional video for the use of the app can be found on YouTube. With the app, the initiative wants to create an inspiring forum around the topic of positive ageing. Videos of their events and podcasts are linked, there is a digital noticeboard, and the next dates for excursions can be published on the app's internal calendar. In addition, the app offers its own messenger so that older people can network and share photos.

In 2020, many new pandemic-friendly programmes were developed, for example sofa concerts. Videos for dancing, singing and cooking were uploaded on their YouTube channel. In order to stay in touch with older people and to support them, the initiative held several courtyard concerts at the Pflegediakonie in Hamburg (Oll Inklusiv, 2020). The nursing home residents were thus able to enjoy the live music from their balcony and were motivated to dance. Also, videos were filmed of the courtyard concerts and published on YouTube to make them accessible to the broad public.

More information

Further information: https://www.oll-inklusiv.de, -
YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP2w86l8tUtZZy_-1HX_B4A
Podcast: https://podtail.com/en/podcast/oll-inklusiv-60-plus/

3.3.3 Sprayhilfe statt Gehhilfe – Old Robinson Sprayers, Hanau

Objectives

The project "Sprayhilfe statt Gehilfe" was initiated in 2019 as part of the 150th birthday of the artist August Gaul in Hanau. The name means “spray aid instead of walking aid”. It was a learning offer on how to do graffiti. The creativity of older people should be promoted. The project also aimed to strengthen the self-efficacy and self-confidence of older people and wanted to contribute to a positive and diverse image of old age.

Key facts

The initiator of the project is the Family and Youth Centre of the urban district Hanau-Wolfgang. Cooperation partners are the Museum Großauheim, the District Development Department and Administrative Department Demographic Change (Hackendahl, 2019). The project receives financial support from the Sparkasse Hanau and the Volunteer Agency of the city of Hanau (Neß, 2020). The graffiti workshops were implemented by two young artists, and the participants paid a fee of 45 Euros for 15 sessions.

Implementation

At the beginning, the participants received an introduction to graffiti spraying. The group of over 10 older people then met once a month to draw up designs for their artworks and performed their graffiti together. In addition to strengthening their social interaction and encouraging their

creativity, the digital skills of the participants are also enhanced. As one interview participant reported, computer programmes play an important role in the designs of the artworks.

In 2020, the project was given the opportunity to spray 10 Telecom and electricity boxes (Neß, 2020). This opportunity allowed older people to actively participate in shaping the cityscape and strengthened their self-efficacy and democratic participation.

Results

The artworks, which were completed by the 150th birthday of August Gaul, were presented to the public at a group exhibition in November 2019.

The participants took great pleasure in spraying and actively shaping the Hanau townscape. Therefore, the meetings were continued and the idea of setting up a "walking gallery" along one road in Hanau was born (Neß, 2020). The participants have continued to meet once a month, and the meetings at the "Spray Café" are still open to anyone interested. The group now calls itself the "Old Robinson Sprayers". With the help of a hygiene concept, the participants were able to continue meeting in 2020.In September 2020, the participants' new artworks were presented at a vernissage.

More information

https://menschen-in-hanau.de/de/sprayhilfe-statt-gehhilfe-update/

3.4 Recommendations for training

3.4.1 Needs of the end-users

The following needs were mentioned by the interviewees to be particularly important:

- Reduce shyness and fear, strengthen self-confidence
- Create a lively atmosphere
- Show the personal benefits of using a digital tool (preferably by peers)
- Opportunities for social exchange and the possibility of getting to know each other in an informal setting, especially in the run-up to the training
- Individual needs should be addressed during the training
- The trainer should be patient, speak loudly, use simple language, convey knowledge in small steps and repeat content over and over again

3.4.2 Obstacles to actively participate in the community

Older citizens often have more time resources to be actively involved in the community compared to younger ones. However, they also more often have physical impairments that prevent them from doing so. Beside the personal health status, active participation in the

community is influenced by a person's mobility, housing situation, social situation, active or less active social environment, lifestyle, etc.

Obstacles mentioned by the interviewees are:

- Lack of services or infrastructure on site, e.g. pick-up and drop-off services
- Offerings that are not well adapted to the diversity of interests of older people, e.g. dancing, museums, music, café visits, readings, culture and education, board games
- Lack of information and knowledge, e.g. where and when does what take place?
- Lack of self-confidence
- Social isolation
- Health reasons

3.4.3 Strategies to attract and address potential training participants

Many of the interviewees stressed that it is particularly desirable if the training reaches those who have so far shied away from using digital tools. The following ideas were mentioned:

- The training offer should definitely be low-threshold and if possible free of charge.
- The information about the training should be easy to understand (simple language).
- The benefit that the training has for the participants should be emphasised by showing the possibilities of digital tools that are particularly useful for older people.
- To overcome financial barriers, loan or second-hand equipment could be organised.
- If mobility is limited, support such as a transport service, should be offered.
- A personal escort to the first appointment could motivate those who are shy to get actively involved.
- Training rooms should be located where senior citizens usually like to spend time and should be barrier-free.
- Municipal contact points, libraries, religious communities can be used to get in touch; flyers can be placed in well-visited public places such as pharmacies, banks, public buildings, etc.
- Information about the training should be published in local newspapers.

Addressing potential participants personally is considered to be much more successful than providing information through flyers, print media, etc. One participant suggested reaching potential training participants where they meet for coffee, e.g. in district or community centres or at neighbourhood help centres. It is important to inform them about the training *before* the coffee is served.

3.4.4 Appropriate training contents and methods

The following should be considered when planning the training:

- Clear communication about the goal of the training at the beginning (regardless of whether the goal is to be given or worked out in the training itself) and how the goals will be achieved is important.
- The training should be suitable for participants with different levels of prior knowledge and digital skills.
- Depending on the level of prior knowledge, the basics should be taught first, and participants should be encouraged to adjust their expectations if they have set themselves very high goals.
- Several times, the interviewees stressed that practice plays a crucial role. During the training sessions, there should be the opportunity to playfully handle the medium and try out the functions. Homework is also seen as important to practice newly acquired skills at home.
- The training sessions should take place on a regular basis with not too big intervals between the dates.
- In general, a group size of 5-8 persons is recommended for a digital literacy training.

The following contents were mentioned in the interviews as particularly interesting for older people: Dealing with the internet, in general or with specific questions (according to a trainer, seniors are mainly interested in health-related topics and travel planning) as well as dealing with digital images and image editing. Special attention should also be paid to possible dangers on the Internet, in order to prevent fraud or misuse of data and to reduce uncertainties, as well as to the protection of personal data (social networks, dealing with cookies, etc.).

3.5 Feedback on the relevance of the project

According to one of the interviewed experts, the European orientation of the project can bring to light interesting insights into the differences regarding the use of digital tools by older people, which can be incorporated into the practical implementation of innovative projects in the participating countries. The approach that digital tools are seen as tools and not as an end in itself was also well received by the interviewees (see quotes).

The project was also met with great interest among potential training participants. They see it as an opportunity to learn something new, to exchange with others and to broaden their horizons.

One interviewee pointed out that for the project it is important to help people learn the skills they need to benefit from the opportunities of digitalisation. Other interviewees stressed that older citizens should be supported more in order not to become "digitally left behind" and emphasised the increasing importance of digital literacy for older people. The project is

welcomed because offers to increase the digital competence of older people - especially in rural areas - do not yet exist everywhere.

4. Relevant stakeholders and potential cooperation partners

We were glad to involve several members of the Senior Citizens' Council of Hanau, who contributed the *Bridge the Gap!* Project with inspiring ideas and are willing to support the implementation of the trainings. It was originally planned to conduct a new election of the council members at the beginning of 2021. Due to the pandemic, the election will be postponed, and the current members will go on with their work as elected representatives of older people of Hanau for an undefined period.

We also have interviewed a representative of the Hanau Senior Citizens' Office, which is responsible for coordination and implementation of digital literacy training offers and supporting older people with technical problems. Like in former project (Mobility Scouts and AFE-Activists) we initially planned to include the Hanau Senior Citizens' Office and the administrative department Demographic Change in the implementation of the project in Germany. However, after the interview phase was completed, it became clear that due to a long-term illness of the responsible person, this planned cooperation could not be realised. At the time of writing this report, negotiations about a new pilot location were still on-going.

In the course of the interviews, we got in touch with the head of the administrative department “Life in old Age” of the Main-Kinzig district. Its team provides information and education in the form of brochures and conferences. They develop new offers for the care of older people, coordinate care and housing counselling and support the establishment of help networks to promote independent living for older people.

Further, we plan to inform the service unit "Digitalisation and Education for Older People" of the German Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO e. V.) about the project outcomes and activities and to use the BAGSOs newsletter and magazine for dissemination activities.

5. Quotes of interviewees

“You catapult yourself into old age and loneliness if you don't take advantage of these opportunities.” (Hiltburg Wussow, 86 years)

„What I like about the project is that digital tools are only understood and used as an addition to personal human relationships.” (Irmhild Neidhardt, head of the administrative department “Life in old Age” of the Main-Kinzig district)

"A certain mobility is necessary for communication. But this is not always the case with senior citizens. Therefor it's a huge advantage to be able to use digital tools." (Potential training participant, 66 years)

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Annex 1: Lead questions for interviews with stakeholders or experts

Organisation: …

Professional background: …

The **Bridge the Gap!** project aims to train, empower and support older people to explore, analyse and (re-)shape their neighbourhoods as activists according to their interests and needs and to make use of digital tools to do this.

Q1 Why is it important to increase the digital literacy of older people in a project like **Bridge the Gap!**?

Q2 What are the main obstacles for older citizens to actively participate in their community?

Q3 What benefits can digitalisation bring to older citizens?

Q4 What disadvantages do you see for those who cannot use digital tools?

Q5 In your opinion, what are the main barriers preventing older citizens from using digital tools?

Q6 What is particularly important when teaching knowledge about the use of digital tools to the group of older citizens (e.g. regarding settings, proceedings …)?

Q7 Which digital technology skills are older citizens particularly keen to learn?"

Q8 Which training methods can you recommend?

Q9 What should be considered to in reaching out to older people with fewer opportunities (e.g. socio-economic or health issues) and involving them in a digital training to improve their neighbourhoods?

Q10 Do you have ideas or know about inspiring examples of creating age-friendly environments with the help of digital means?

Annex 2: Lead questions for interviews with older learners/activists

Age: …

Gender: …

Educational level (ISCED 2011 level 0-8): …

Participation in courses in the last two years: … courses

Background in professional and/or voluntary work: …

Q1 Have you ever participated in a local project or initiative to create an age-friendly environment? If yes, please describe your activities.

Q2 Which digital technology do you use personally?

Q3 What advantages do you see in using digital tools?

Q4 Are you having difficulties in using specific digital tools? If yes, which?

The **Bridge the Gap!** project aims to train, empower and support older people to improve their neighbourhoods according to their interests and needs and to make use of digital tools to do this.

Q5 Is a project like **Bridge the Gap!** raising your interest? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Q6 Would you participate in a training for digital literacy and improving your neighbourhood? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Q7 How should such a training be designed so that it is attractive to you?

Q8 What would be a good way to reach out for disadvantaged people (e.g. socio-economic or health issues) and to encourage them to participate in a training for digital literacy to improve their neighbourhoods?

Q9 Do you have any ideas what should be done to improve your neighbourhood towards an age-friendly environment?

Q10 How could digital tools facilitate the work towards age-friendly environments?