

Navigating Digital Inclusion in the Nordic-Baltic Region

Current trends and future
directions

Agenda

❖ Introduction

❖ Project insights

- ❖ What is digital inclusion and why does it matter?
- ❖ Mapping the policy landscape
- ❖ Key actors in the digital inclusion landscape
- ❖ Addressing challenges in an increasingly digital society
- ❖ Monitoring digital inclusion

❖ Current gaps & recommendations

What is Digital Inclusion in Action?

- Three-year research project (Oct. 2022 – Oct. 2025)
- Builds on Ministerial Declaration Digital North 2.0, 2021-2024
- Funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers - Ministerial Council for Digitalisation (MR Digital)
- Three project partners:
 - Nordregio (Lead), Stockholm
 - Consultancy Consortium “Digital Europe”, Copenhagen and Brussels
 - Nordic Welfare Centre, Stockholm



Digital Inclusion in Action's objectives



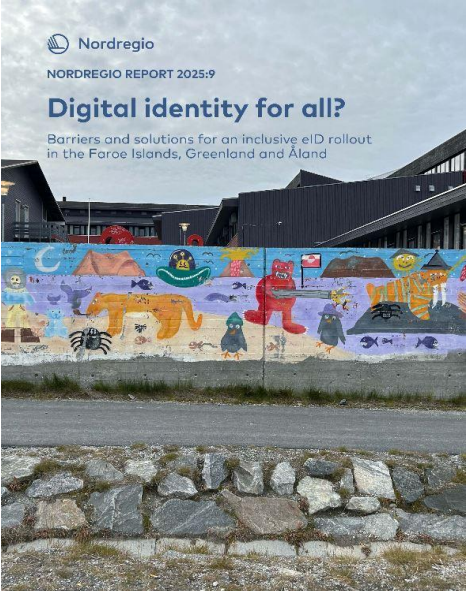
Understand digital inclusion dynamics
in the Nordic and Baltic region

Foster Nordic-Baltic collaboration on
inclusion

Enhance awareness of inclusion
policies in the Nordic and Baltic region

Create Nordic-Baltic monitoring
framework

Project insights: What is digital inclusion and why does it matter?



Why is Nordic-Baltic digital inclusion important?

“Nordic and Baltic paradox” ...

Nordic and Baltic countries are among the most highly digitalised in Europe



Increasing parts of everyday life require digital skills and tools to participate



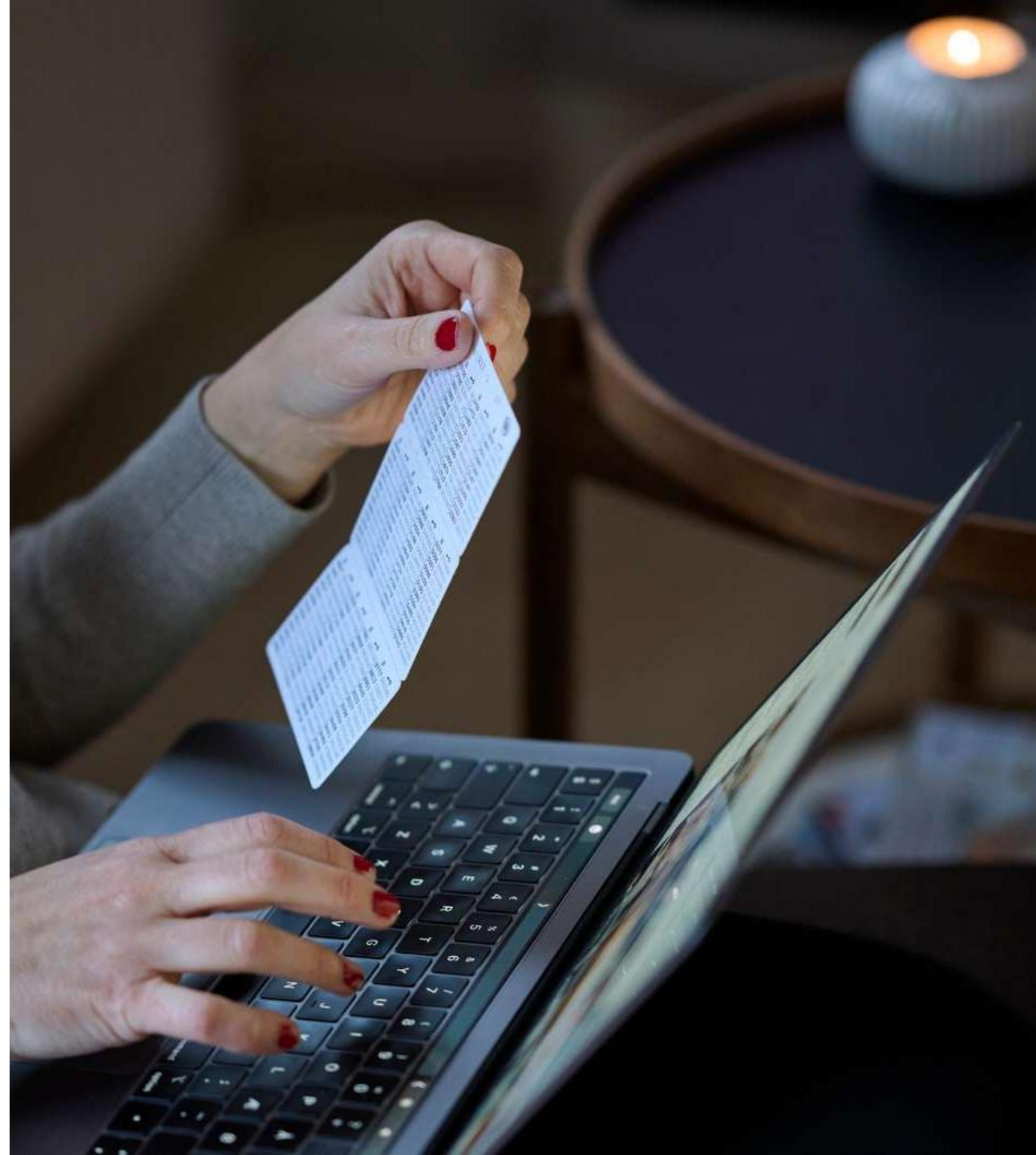
Certain groups identified as at risk of digital exclusion



The consequences of digital exclusion

Nordic-Baltic digital exclusion is painful and risks further increasing inequalities:

- Access to information
- Job and educational opportunities
- Civic participation
- Access to healthcare & public services
- Economic activities
- Increasing risk of social isolation



Certain groups identified as at risk of digital exclusion

- **Older adults** (e.g., McCosker et al. 2021; Weil et al. 2021)
- **People with disabilities** (e.g., Tsatsou 2021)
- **Immigrants** (e.g., Bastick & Mallet-Garcia 2022; Chen et al. 2020)
- **People with low or no education** (e.g., Wilson-Menzfeld et al. 2025)
- **Rural communities** (e.g., Correa & Pavez 2016)
- **Some young people** (e.g., Gómez 2020)
- **People with low income** (e.g., Helsper & Reisdorf 2017)



Mentimeter

From your perspective, what do you see as the main barriers to digital inclusion?



Barriers to digital inclusion

Access to Internet

Literacy and/or
language barriers

Digital skills

Access to a
digital device

Lack of domain
knowledge (don't know
the public sector and
where to find the right
self-service solution)

Lack of trust, sense of
security, unwillingness
etc.

Project insights: Mapping the policy landscape



Mapping the policy landscape

Digital inclusion is high on the political agenda across the N-B region

- Increased attention, especially since COVID-19
- All countries recognise its importance...
 - yet differ in concreteness regarding problems, groups and solutions

Large alignment concerning the main groups at risk of digital exclusion across the region

- Some different focuses, but similar challenges identified across the region, e.g.:
 - eID & increased security requirements
 - Need for better monitoring practices
 - Rapidly changing digital societies (e.g.: AI)
 - Development of digital skills and literacy



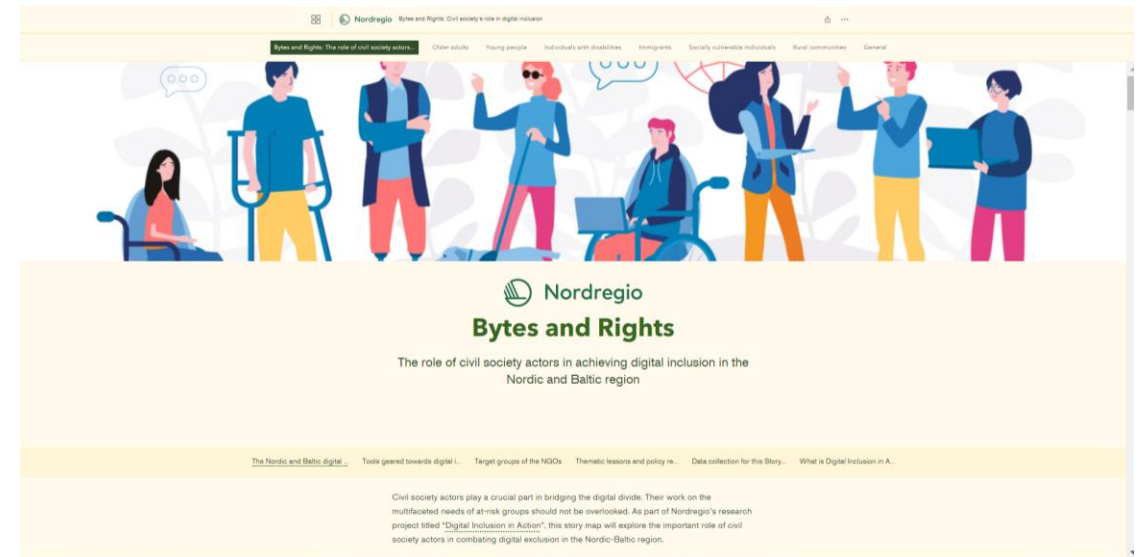
Mapping the policy landscape

Few concrete definitions – what defines digital inclusion?

- No common definition of “digital inclusion” across the region
 - Are we talking about the same things?
 - Indications of similar understanding: **all link it to social justice**
- **Lack of clear responsibility** - who ensures digital inclusion and access to digital services and eID?



Project insights: Key actors in the digital inclusion landscape



Key actors in the digital inclusion landscape

Several different actors and activities:

- Libraries
- Municipalities
- Authorities
- Public sector
- Private sector
- Civil society actors
- Educational institutions
- Social network & family

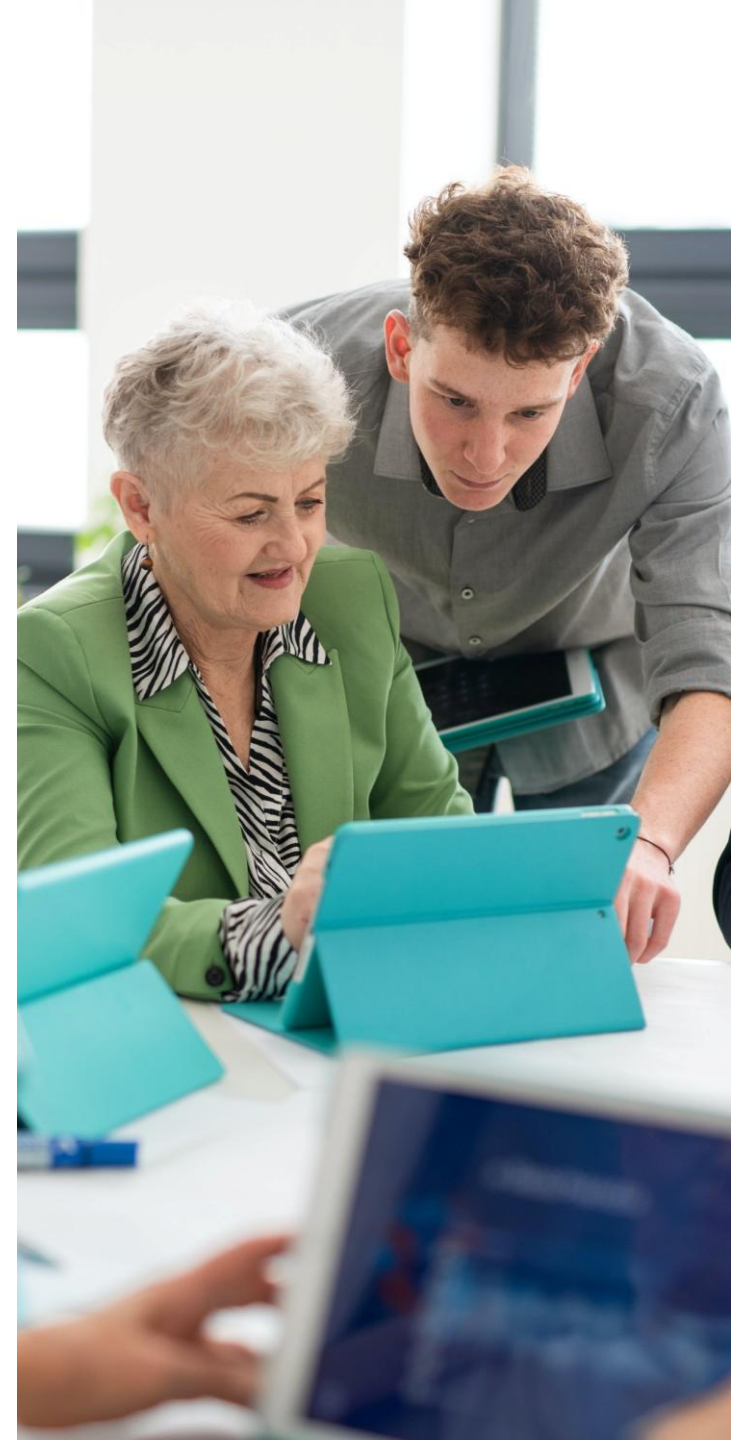
But uncoordinated efforts...



Civil society actors

Zooming in on civil society actors

- Civil society as a core element of N-B societies: High levels of trust and participation in voluntary organizations (Götz 2019)
- Identified as key actors in the N-B digital inclusion-policies
- Acting as a bridge between public/official institutions and people
- Can reach groups that are at risk of being left behind

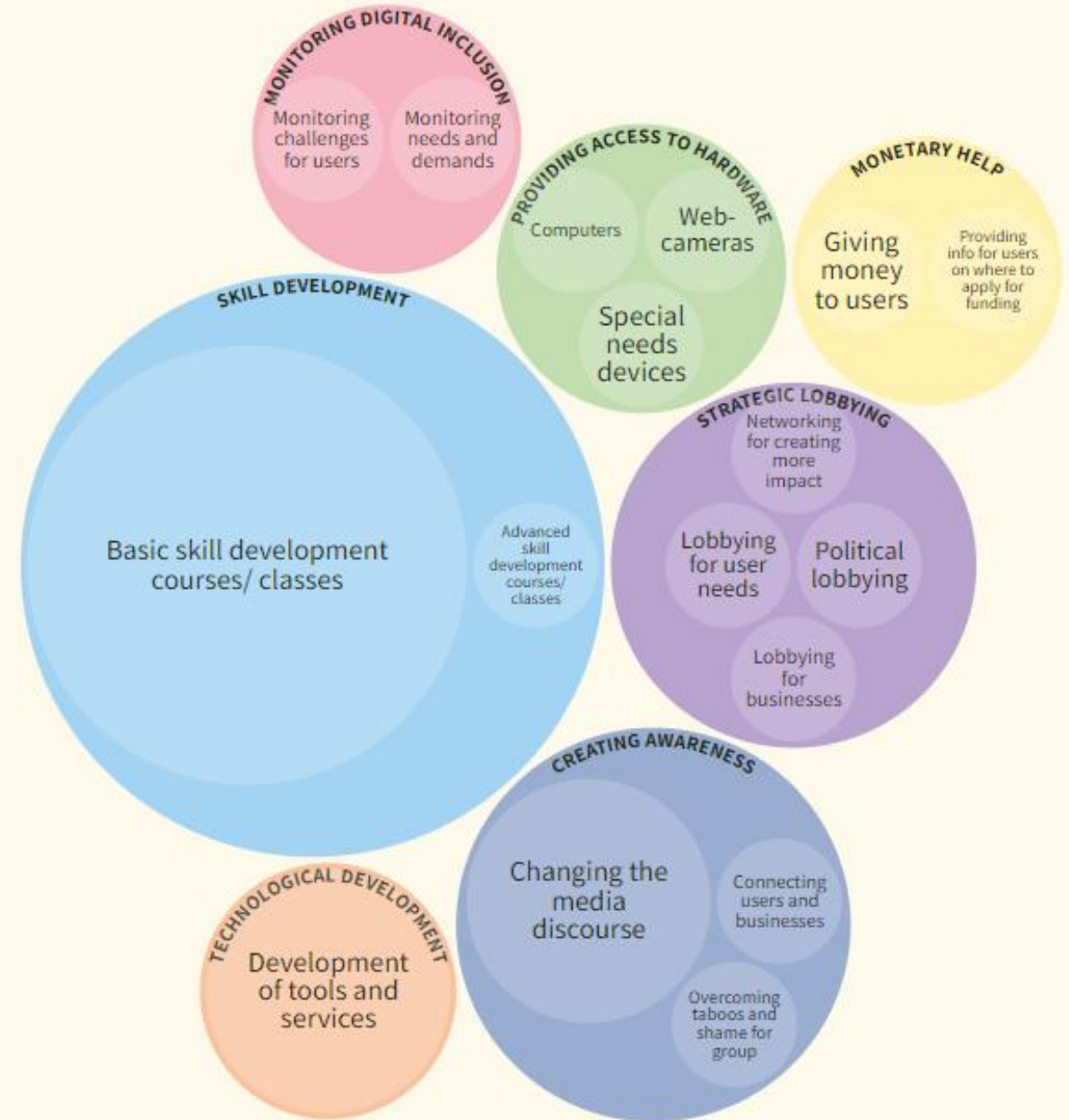


Main approaches

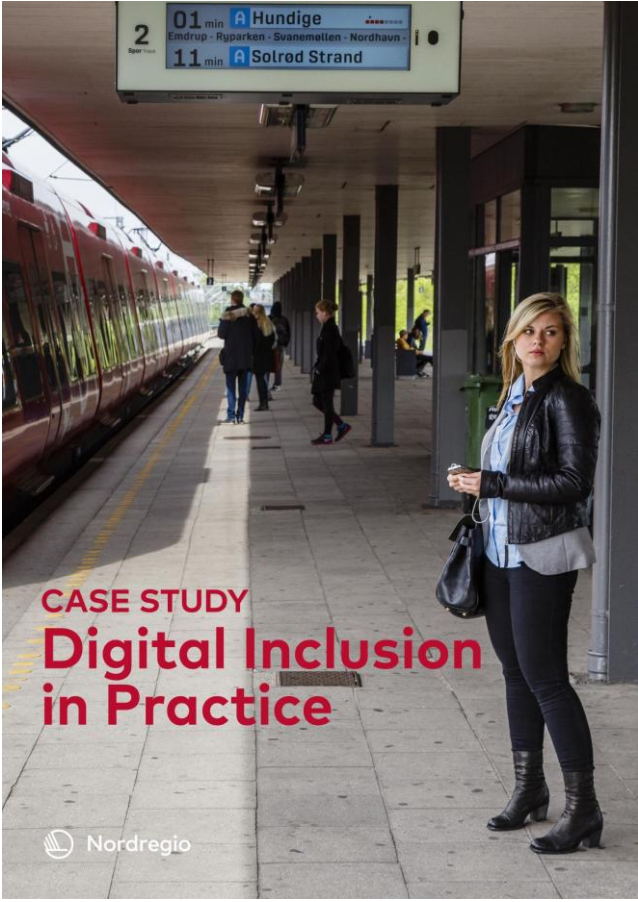
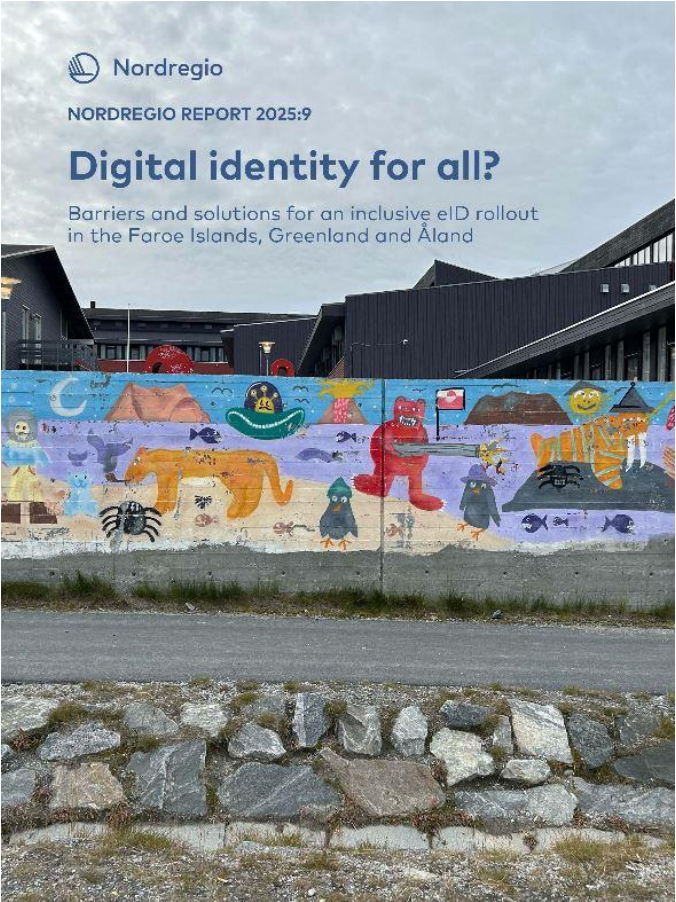
User groups are incredible specific and complex

- Solutions to aid them vary, including:
 - Skill development
 - Strategic lobbying
 - Monitoring digital inclusion/exclusion
 - Technological development
 - Creating awareness & battling social stigma
 - Providing access to hardware
 - Monetary help

Key enablers of digital inclusion exist in our communities!



Project insights: Addressing challenges in an increasingly digital society



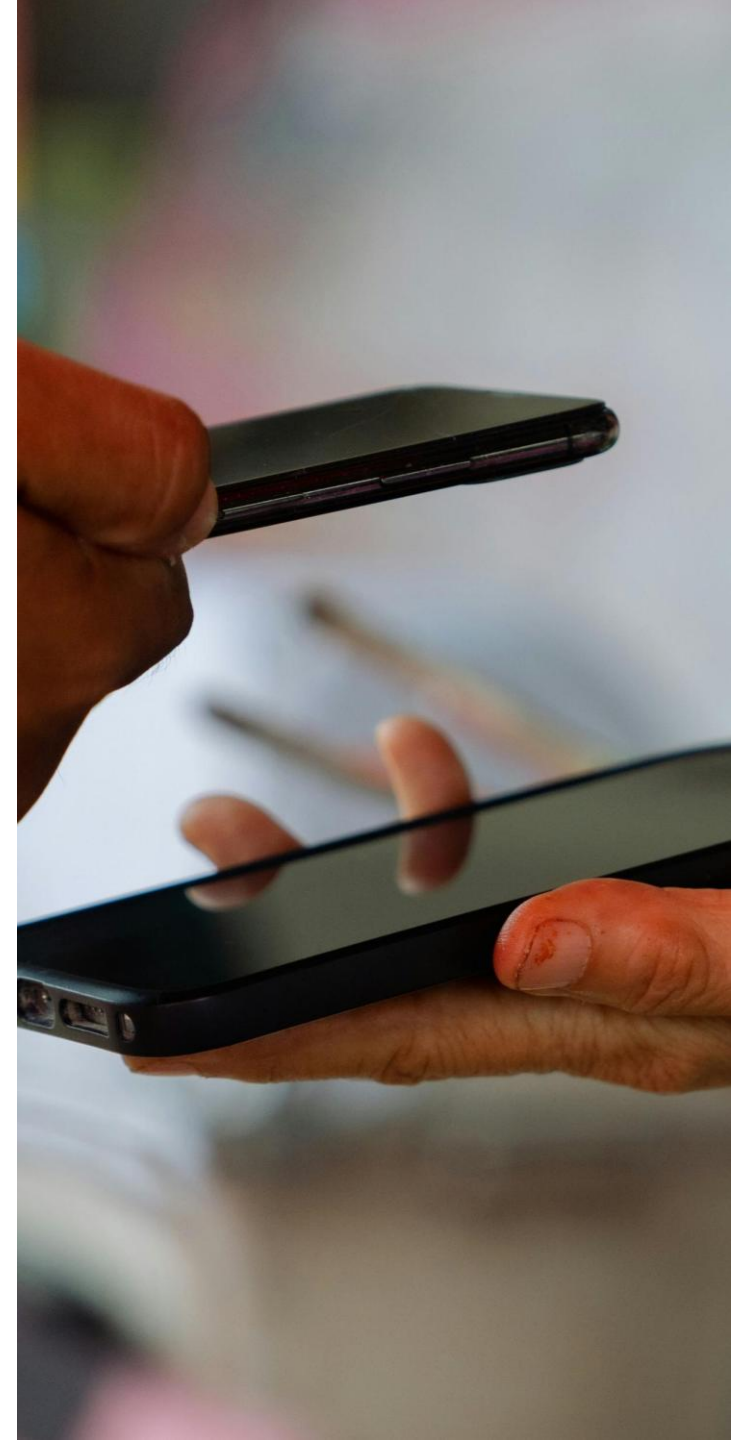
Addressing challenges in an increasingly digital society

Increasingly digitalised societies:

- Apps, digital public services, online forms, digital communication (e.g. schools and banks), telemedicine, tele-education, eIDs
- Growing reliance on people to be digitally capable
- Digital public services VS physical offices

However, not all can acquire or use digital solutions...

- Due to e.g.: Language, skills, connectivity, fraud, lack of documents, unwillingness
- Lack of user involvement in the design of solutions from the outset
- Balancing social responsibility and business objectives?



Good practices and strategies

How to roll out inclusive new digital products and tools?

Inclusive design

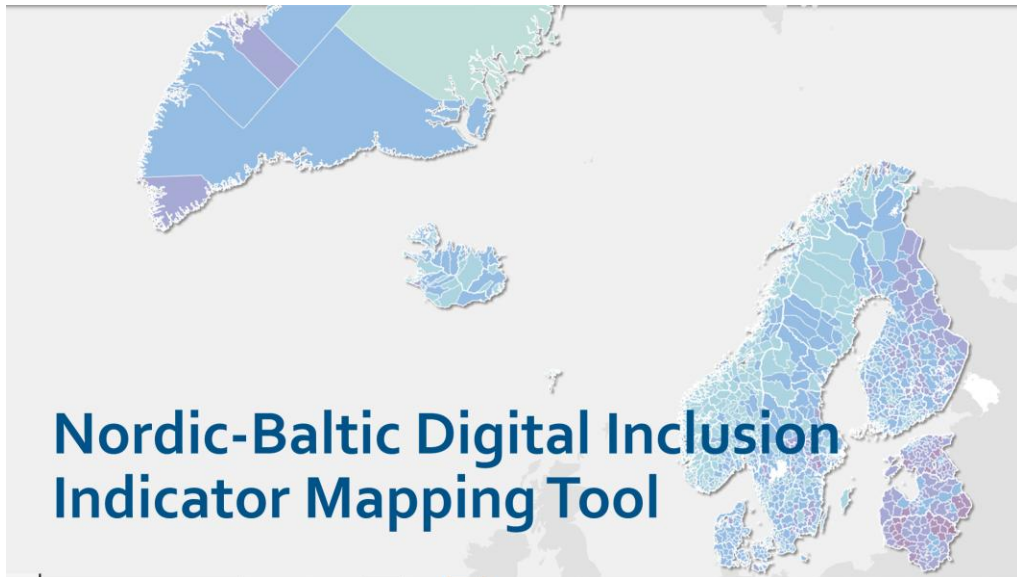
- Involve user groups in the design of solutions from the outset and continuously
- Ensure design serves those at the margins and prioritise the voices of those often overlooked or excluded

Flexibility in solutions and differentiated user needs

- A single standardised solution may not suit all users
- Providing alternative solutions, analogue services, for those who cannot or do not want to be digital



Project insights: Monitoring digital inclusion



Monitoring digital inclusion

How and why do we monitor digital inclusion/exclusion?

- Identified as key to be able to track progress and map who are at risk of digital exclusion, how many and which measures are effective
- Digital exclusion is dependent on two main factors:
 - **Digital accessibility** (access to devices, broadband and more)
 - **Digital capabilities** (skills and demographic characteristics)
- However: Insufficient monitoring of barriers and indicators



Monitoring digital inclusion

[Nordic and Baltic digital inclusion indicator mapping tool](#) – new tool launched yesterday!

- An online interactive analytical tool
 - Factors related to digital inclusion
 - Indicators and mechanisms behind digital inequality
 - Data from the local statistical offices and Eurostat for the last year available
 - Municipality level

Purpose: to enrich the existing tools

- Shows and monitors digital inclusion
- Grasps the diversity of the region and allows comparison
- Can be used for diverse purposes (research, analytics, monitoring)
- Can be broaden further

Please try it and give us feedback!



Current gaps & recommendations

Current gaps

Social and digital inclusion - not only closely related but inseparable, but:

- Lack of clear responsibility: who is responsible for ensuring digital inclusion and access to digital services and eID?
- Lots of activities and actors, but uncoordinated efforts (“re-inventing the wheel”)
- Increasingly digitalised societies without ensuring that no one is left behind
- Inconsistent monitoring of digital inclusion and insufficient indicators



Mentimeter

From your perspective, what is needed to create a more inclusive digital society? What recommendations would you offer?

More options for physical contact, more desks like "before"

More cooperation between different actors

Access to internet. Information. Time.

Literacy in AI

More responsibility to private actors

More classes in public spaces

Resources to educate people and improve their digital skills

Hire more service- and ux designers in the public sector

From your perspective, what is needed to create a more inclusive digital society? What recommendations would you offer?

Local authorities with a coordination role of all the stakeholders dealing in digital/social exclusion

Easy access support, maybe like a "digital center".

More inclusive (eg simpler) hardware and digital services.

More coordination and cooperation between different actors. Also in the whole Nordics and Baltics

Every individual needs to have an eID

More information available to the public specifically for people who don't work with computer or in a digital environment.

We have to be humble in the work for inclusion of all the citizens.. If they are hesitant, than we have to offer more information

More focus on new technology in the education system from early years

Recommendations for enabling an inclusive digital society

- **Responsibility and accountability** with clear allocation of roles and alignment with human rights standards
- **Coordinated efforts** among the different actors and activities
- **Recognition** of the complexity of the groups, problems and solutions (one size does not fit all)
- **User involvement** in the design of solutions (and policies) from the beginning with accessibility as core principle (inclusion by default)
- **More digital skills development opportunities** that meet the need of the people and where they are
- **Structured monitoring approach** to digital inclusion and consistent monitoring
- **Upholding analogue services** and other alternatives



Thank you for listening!

Questions? Please reach
out!

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Publications

Digital Inclusion in Action publications

- [Mapping tool for digital inclusion indicators relevant for the Nordic-Baltic region and framework paper](#)
- [Report on eID rollout and usage linked to inclusion challenges in Greenland, Åland and the Faroe Islands](#)
- [Story maps on civil society actors working with digital inclusion in the Nordic and Baltic countries](#)
- [Policy report on national policy initiatives on digital inclusion in the Nordic and Baltic region](#)
- [Report on monitoring practises on digital inclusion in the Nordic and Baltic region](#)
- [Case study from the private sector focusing on Denmark's public transportation system](#)
- [See all our publications and follow our work on our DigiHub website](#)

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