



**ENHANCING MEDIA
AND DIGITAL LITERACY
OF OLDER PERSONS
IN MONTENEGRO:
FROM FRAGMENTED
EFFORTS TO SYSTEMIC
INCLUSION**

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ENHANCING MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY OF OLDER PERSONS IN MONTENEGRO: FROM FRAGMENTED EFFORTS TO SYSTEMIC INCLUSION



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Media and digital literacy for older persons in Montenegro remains underdeveloped despite rapid digitalisation. Without targeted and coordinated action, digital advancement risks reinforcing existing inequalities. A comprehensive approach, aligned with EU frameworks and adapted to local needs, can ensure that digitalisation becomes a tool for inclusion, enabling older persons to fully participate in social, economic, and democratic life.

As Montenegro continues to [advance its digital transformation](#), particularly in the delivery of public services, access to information, and everyday communication, older persons remain disproportionately excluded from these processes. While [internet access](#) has increased significantly at the national level, this progress does not translate into equal participation across age groups. Older citizens are less likely to own digital devices, [use online services regularly](#), or feel confident navigating digital environments.

This [gap reflects](#) not only differences in access but also lower levels of digital and media literacy and reduced confidence and trust in digital tools. As a result, many older persons face difficulties in accessing essential services such as eGovernment platforms, healthcare systems, and online communication channels. In an increasingly digital society, this exclusion directly [affects their ability to exercise rights](#), access information, and remain socially connected.

At the same time, older persons are particularly vulnerable to online risks, [including disinformation](#), fraud, phishing, and the misuse of personal data. Without the necessary skills to critically assess information or recognise manipulation, they are at higher risk of harm. Therefore, digital and [media illiteracy](#) among older populations is not only a matter of skills, but also a question of safety, inclusion, and equal participation in society.

>> Current state of play in Montenegro <<

Montenegro has established a general strategic framework supporting digital transformation and the development of digital skills, [including the Strategy for Digital Transformation 2022–2026](#). However, within these frameworks, older persons are not sufficiently recognised as a distinct target group requiring tailored measures and support.

Existing initiatives related to digital and media literacy are typically broad and aimed at the general population, without addressing the specific needs of older users. In practice, most activities are project-based, time-limited, and often dependent on donor funding or individual institutional efforts. This results in a lack of continuity, coordination, and national coverage.

There are, however, important positive examples. The Agency for Audiovisual Media Services has implemented [targeted activities through its media literacy platform](#), including workshops and [educational materials designed for older persons](#), such as guides and video tutorials adapted to users with lower digital skills. Additionally, [training programmes for adults with lower qualifications](#) have included basic digital skills components, demonstrating the feasibility of practical, skills-based learning approaches.

Despite these efforts, the overall landscape remains fragmented. There is currently no integrated policy framework that connects digital literacy, media literacy, access to services, and protection from online risks specifically for older persons.

>> Needs and barriers of older persons <<

The [needs of older persons in the digital environment](#) are practical and closely linked to everyday life. First and foremost, there is a clear need for continuous and accessible digital skills training. One-off workshops are insufficient, as older persons require ongoing, hands-on support to build and retain skills.

Equally important is the need for protection from online risks. Older users [need support in recognising scams](#), phishing attempts, and fraud schemes, as well as understanding how to protect their personal data and privacy. In addition, they require skills to critically evaluate online information and identify disinformation and manipulative content.

Learning formats must also be adapted to their needs. Effective training requires clear and simple language, slower-paced instruction, repetition, and a supportive environment. Psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes or lack of confidence, are often as significant as technical challenges.

Access to support must be local and community-based, while digital literacy should be understood as part of broader social inclusion, as improving digital skills can reduce isolation and strengthen connections with services and communities.

Additionally, there are structural barriers that limit the effective inclusion of older persons in Montenegro's digital and media landscape:

- The absence of a coordinated policy approach. Responsibility for digital and media literacy is distributed across multiple sectors without a clearly defined lead institution. Another key challenge is the reliance on short-term, project-based initiatives, which lack sustainability and scalability. Socio-economic and geographic inequalities further deepen the problem, particularly for older persons in rural areas or with lower income and education levels.
- Digital public services are not always designed with accessibility in mind, making them difficult to use for individuals with limited digital experience. In addition, psychological barriers, such as distrust of digital systems and fear of fraud, remain insufficiently addressed.

>> EU Policy Context <<

The European Union has developed a comprehensive framework aimed at protecting citizens in the digital environment, particularly in response to risks such as disinformation, manipulation, and online harms. At the centre of this framework is the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#), which introduces binding obligations for online platforms to assess and mitigate systemic risks, including the spread of disinformation and [harmful content](#), while strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms. This regulatory approach is complemented by the [Code of Conduct on Disinformation](#), which requires major platforms to take concrete measures to limit the dissemination of false and misleading content, particularly in contexts where such content may have a significant societal impact.

Within this broader framework, [media](#) and digital [literacy](#) are recognised not as stand-alone policy areas, but as key tools for empowering users to navigate online environments safely and critically. EU policy consistently emphasises that citizens, especially vulnerable groups, need the skills to recognise manipulation, assess information, and protect themselves from online risks. Supporting this approach, initiatives such as the [European Digital Media Observatory \(EDMO\)](#) promote cooperation between researchers, fact-checkers, and civil society actors, contributing to a safer and more transparent information ecosystem.

Overall, the EU model combines platform responsibility, regulatory oversight, and user empowerment, intending to ensure that individuals are both protected from systemic risks and equipped to participate safely in the digital space.

Ireland provides a relevant example of how digital inclusion for older persons can be structured through community-based and human-centred approaches. Research [on digital inclusion initiatives](#) in Ireland highlights the central role of digital educators, both professional and volunteer, in supporting older adults through personalised, step-by-step learning processes tailored to their needs. These programmes would be typically delivered through a combination of in-person sessions, workshops, and remote support, with a strong emphasis on hands-on learning and confidence-building rather than purely technical instruction. Importantly, these approaches address not only skills gaps but also psychological barriers such as fear, lack of confidence, and anxiety around technology. This approach illustrates how digital inclusion policies for older persons can move beyond basic training and instead focus on building confidence, ensuring ongoing support, and embedding learning within community structures.



“It’s like not being able to read and write”

TEI '25: Proceedings of the Nineteenth International Conference o
Tangible, Embedded, and Embodied Interaction Article No.: 34--

>> Recommendations <<

- Montenegro should adopt a **coordinated, cross-sectoral approach to digital inclusion and online safety of older persons**, moving beyond fragmented initiatives. This includes developing a dedicated national programme that explicitly links digital and media literacy with protection from online harms such as fraud, disinformation, and misuse of personal data, with clear institutional responsibilities and sustainable funding.
- At the local level, **accessible and continuous support mechanisms** should be established through community infrastructure such as libraries, social services, and municipal centres, providing hands-on assistance for both digital skills and safe use of online services. In parallel, a **standardised, practical training framework** should be developed, focused on real-life applications and adapted to older users, combining basic digital skills with online safety and media literacy.
- Media literacy should be reframed as a **tool for protection and resilience**, with targeted awareness and training addressing the specific risks older persons face online. This should be complemented by **intergenerational support programmes**, enabling personalised learning and strengthening social inclusion.
- Finally, public digital services should be improved to ensure **accessibility and safety by design**, while regular data collection should be introduced to monitor digital inclusion and exposure to online risks, ensuring that policies remain evidence-based and responsive.

