Cluj Metropolitan Area

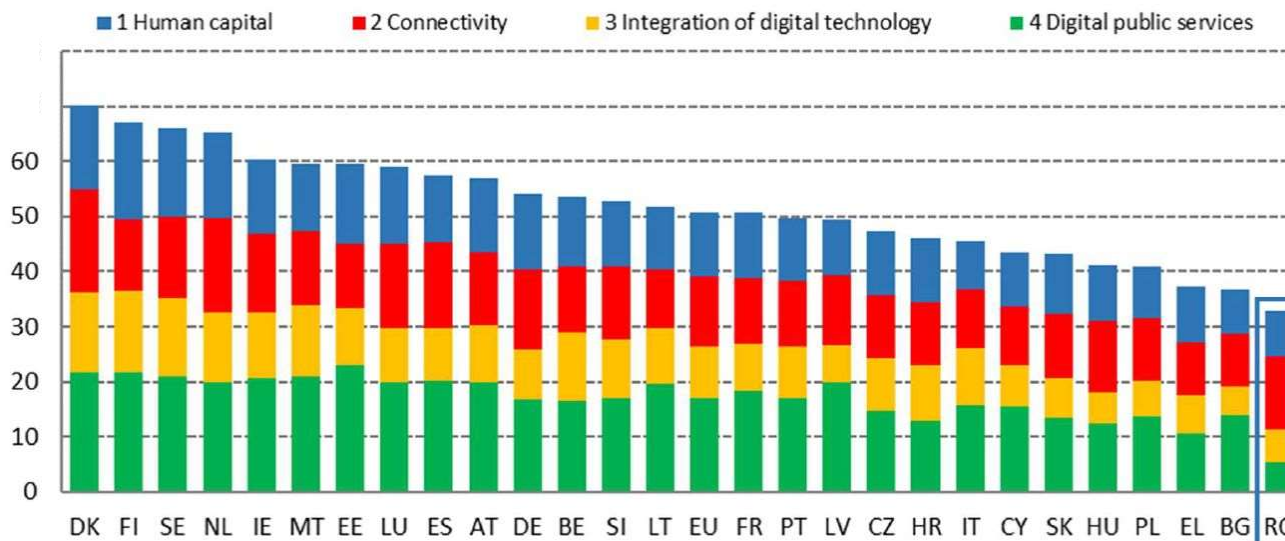## Local workshop: The gap between urban/rural areas, the digital divide and citizenship

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Facts & Figures

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021 ranking

- ▶ Romania ranks 27th of 27 EU Member States in the 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).

- ▶ According to DESI, only 16% of Romanian online users engage actively with e-government services, compared with an EU average of 64%.

- ▶ În Cluj-Napoca, roughly 34% of all the forms received by the city hall this year were sent in digital format (email or online forms).

- ▶ A 2020 academic research ranked Cluj-Napoca first of all cities in Romania, regarding the digital front-office services provided by the city halls, with a score of 92 out of 100.

A different approach

This time we had a more hands-on approach to the local workshop. We conducted face-to-face interviews with experts, then we combined the information gathered with the experience we already have in projects dedicated to bringing the internet to remote areas. We are talking about a marginalized community in Cluj-Napoca, or a distant village, in the metro area. Through this approach, we created synergies between two distinct EU-Funded projects and a public-private partnership.

Best practices

- Action/Project n°1: **Urban/Rural hub - Pilot project in Plaiuri village**

In the digital world, bringing public broadband cable to remote and less affluent communities is equal to having
a road paved in the real world – all the „netizens" will have much easier access to all kinds of public and private services
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- Action/Project n°2: **Cluj Future of Work - Work Package 8**

Where there is a stable, reliable mobile connection, installing wi-fi equipment is less costly and means less red tape to be
done.

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- Action/Project n°3: **The strategy for digital transformation**

Having a big picture in mind always helps coordinate punctual interventions. This is why a local/metropolitan strategy for
digital transformation is like wearing a bulletproof vest before going to war. .

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Lessons learned

Among all actions/projects, please identify some best practices:

1. **Action 1:** Private operators are anything but motivated in investing great amounts of money in building cable or mobile infrastructure for remote communities, as their ROI may not be positive. So, building such infrastructure has to be done by public investments and then opened to private operators.

2. **Action 2:** Free wi-fi in remote and marginalized communities is a good option, especially for areas where there already is a stable mobile connection. This type of connection is useful for purposes such as education and job seeking. However, the quality of the connection may be poorer, so services such as telemedicine may be hampered.

3. **Action 3.** Envisioning a local/metropolitan strategy for digital transformation means that the administration, the experts and the citizens are co-designig their future online. About this. Mr Nicolae Urs will talk more in his presentation

Relevance of selected best practices
Link with EUDIGIT's objectives

EUDIGIT's objectives	n°	Action/ project
Strengthening EU citizenship and citizens awareness	3	Digital Transformation Strategy
Contributing to reduce the digital gap in cities	1	Urban/Rural hub - Pilot project in Plaiuri village
	2	Cluj FoW – WP 8
	3	Digital Transformation Strategy
Co-building digital policies with citizens	2	Cluj FoW – WP 8
	3	Digital Transformation Strategy