

**Input**



**bagso**

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft  
der Seniorenorganisationen

Janina Stiel

# **Older Adults and Digitalization in Germany**

Panel 2:

Older adults and the digital: European perspectives

June 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, online

# BAGSO - An umbrella organisation with 120 members:

- Social welfare associations
- Local older people's advocacy groups and offices for senior citizens
- Senior citizens' organizations of political parties & unions
- Church organisations
- Patient groups and self-help groups and organizations of persons with disabilities
- Sports organisations
- Other senior citizens' organisations



Bundesverband e.V.

## How BAGSO works

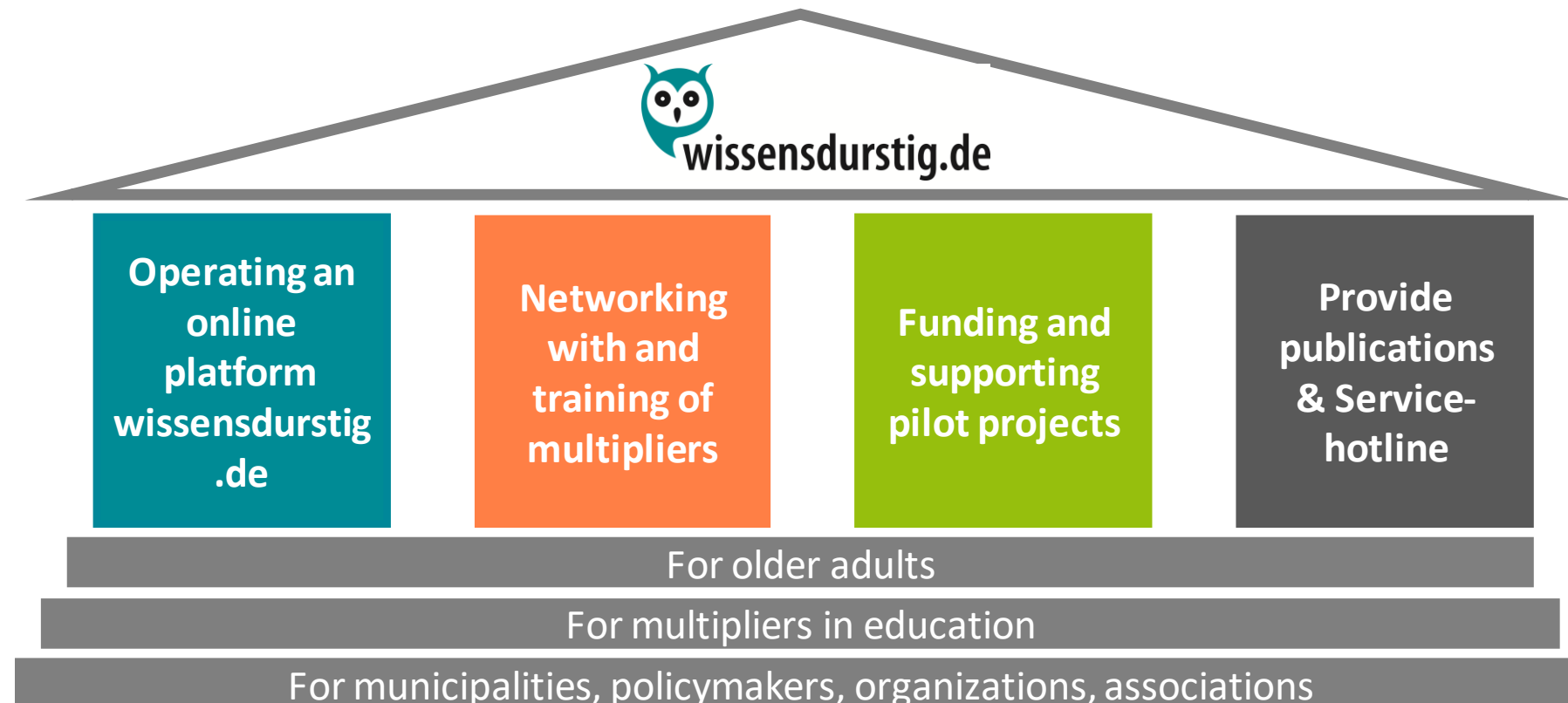
- **Giving impulses, taking positions:** BAGSO puts themes on the political agenda that are relevant for healthy and active ageing.
- With **innovative projects**, it opens new avenues for active, self-determined and healthy ageing.
- In **statements and position papers**, BAGSO identifies requirements for good quality of life in older age and provides recommendations for political action at federal, state and municipal level.
- **Global advocacy, local reach:** BAGSO advocates at the level of the United Nations and the European Union for older people and fosters bilateral exchange to improve the quality of life in older age, beyond the borders of Germany.

The voice of  
older people

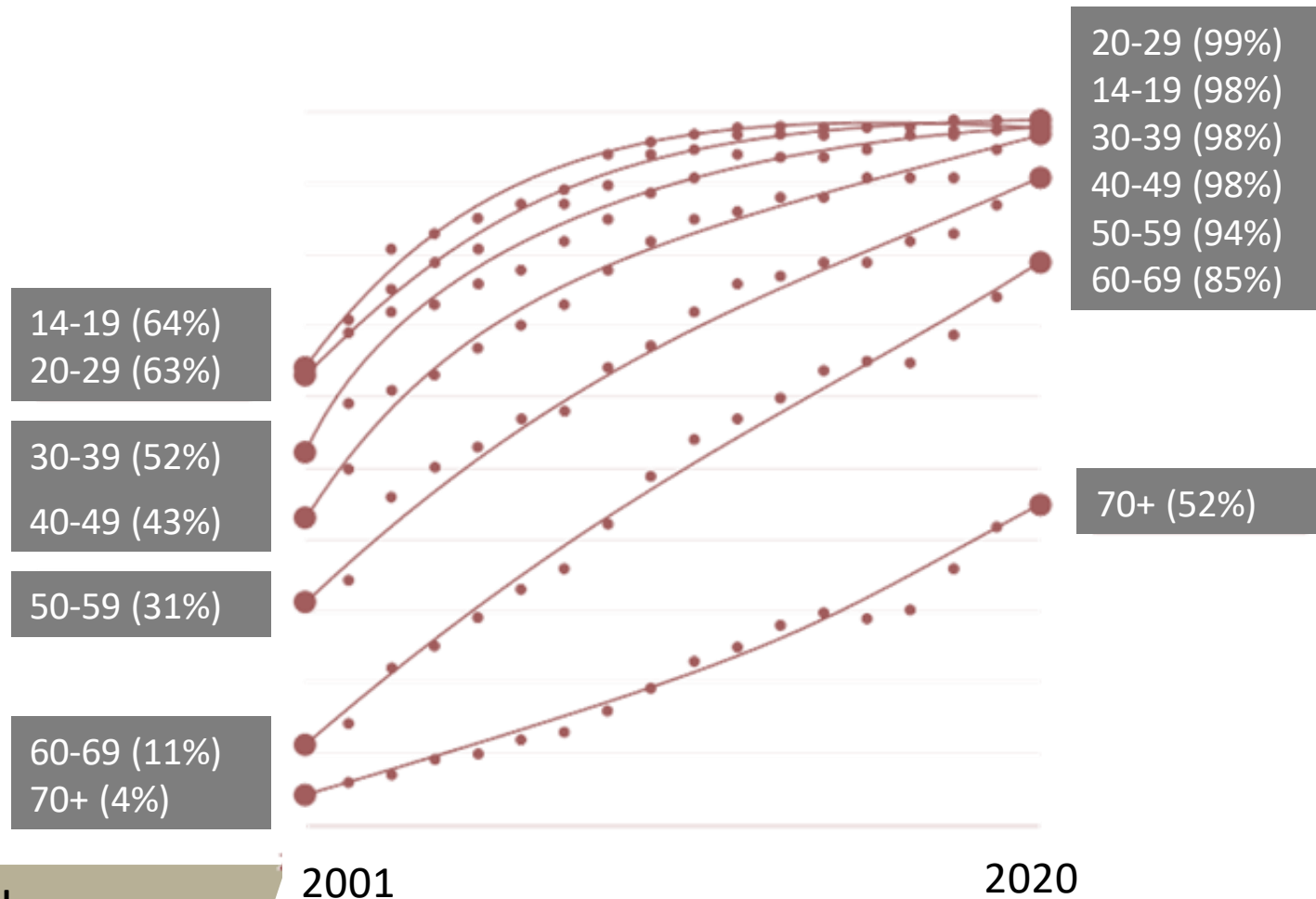
German National  
Association of Senior  
Citizens' Organisations

Graphic design: Kunstw Berlin, Photo credit: BAGSO/Göbgen

# Service center for Digitalization and Adult Education at BAGSO



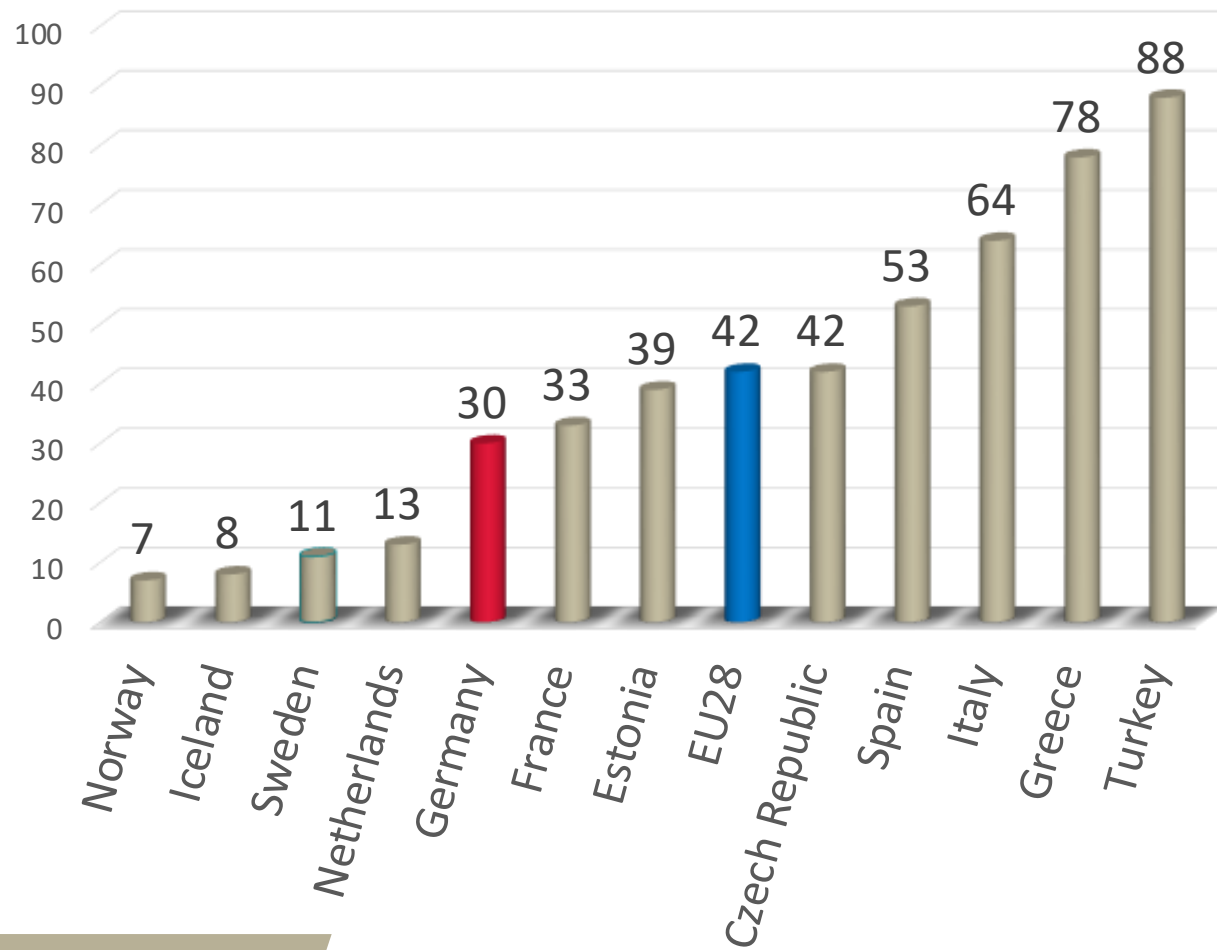
# Digital inclusion of older adults in Germany



Internet use by age groups over time in Germany

Offliner 60+ in Germany: about **9 million people**

(D21 Digital Index 2020/21, Statistisches Bundesamt 2019)



## Offliners in Europe (65-74 y)

Source: Eurostat, 2017.  
Offliner = never used the internet

# Digital inequality reflects social inequality

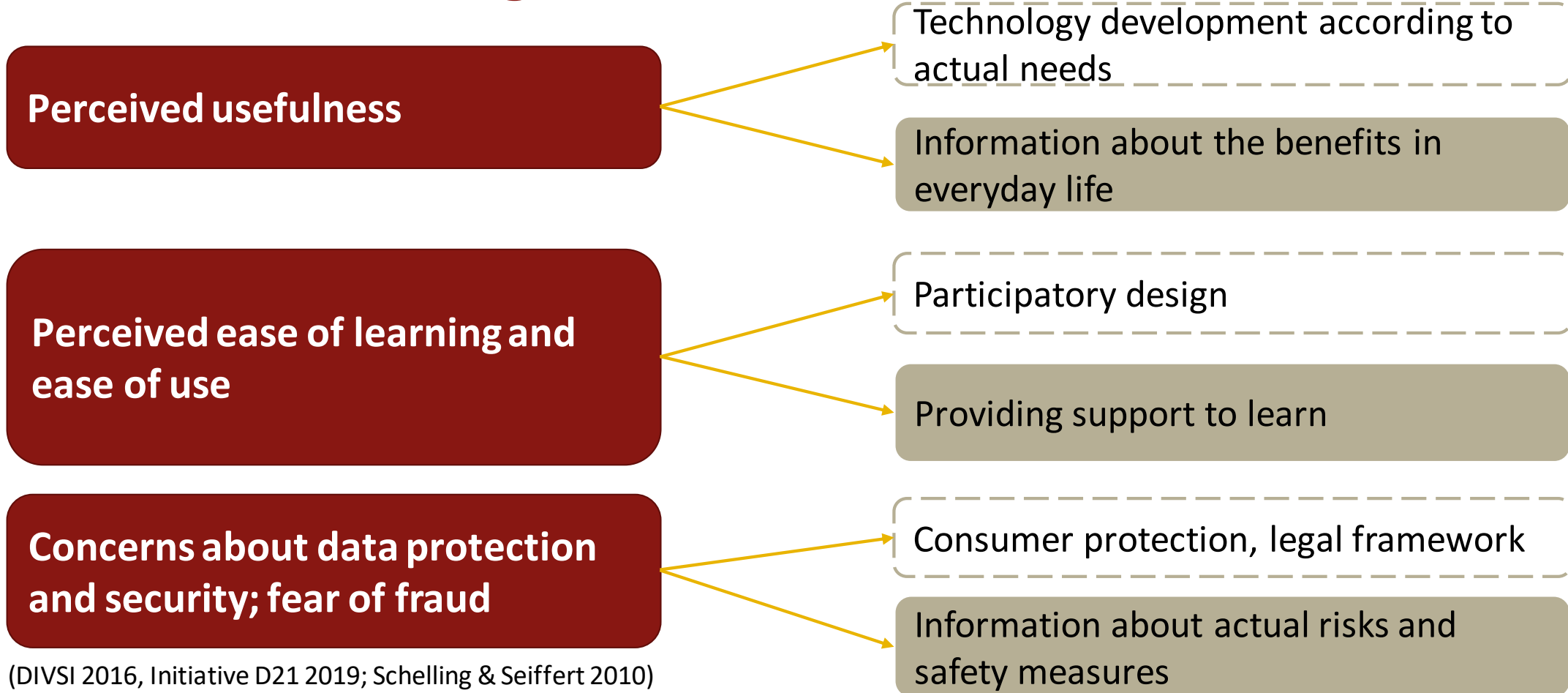
The digital gap does not divide between the old and the young, but between the old and the old.

→ Cumulative effects:

>90% online	<10% online
60+ years male West of Germany high education high income not living alone	60+ years female East of Germany low education low income living alone

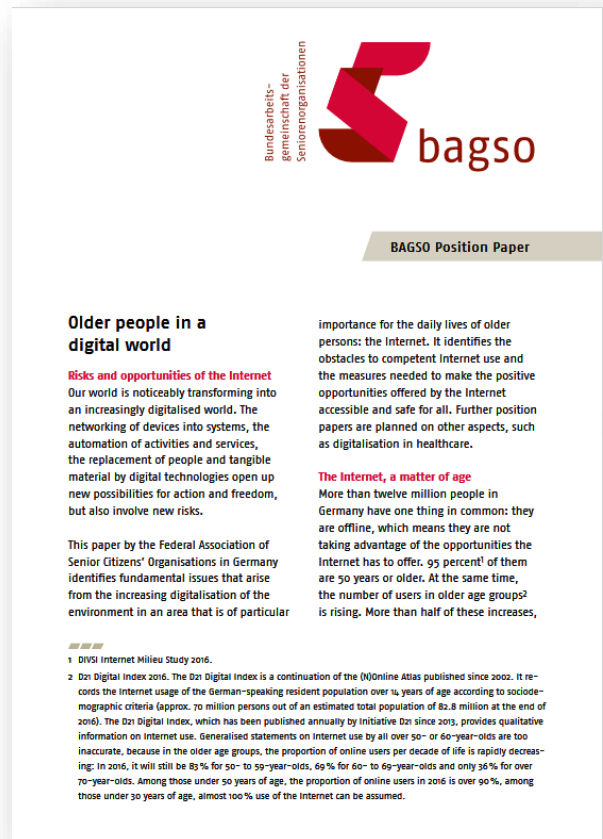
((N)Onliner-Atlas, Sekundäranalysen, Doh 2019)

# Barriers and bridges



(DIVSI 2016, Initiative D21 2019; Schelling & Seiffert 2010)

# Policy recommendations



**BAGSO Position Paper**

**Older people in a digital world**

**Risks and opportunities of the Internet**  
Our world is noticeably transforming into an increasingly digitalised world. The networking of devices into systems, the automation of activities and services, the replacement of people and tangible material by digital technologies open up new possibilities for action and freedom, but also involve new risks.

This paper by the Federal Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations in Germany identifies fundamental issues that arise from the increasing digitalisation of the environment in an area that is of particular importance for the daily lives of older persons: the Internet. It identifies the obstacles to competent Internet use and the measures needed to make the positive opportunities offered by the Internet accessible and safe for all. Further position papers are planned on other aspects, such as digitalisation in healthcare.

**The Internet, a matter of age**  
More than twelve million people in Germany have one thing in common: they are offline, which means they are not taking advantage of the opportunities the Internet has to offer. 95 percent<sup>1</sup> of them are 50 years or older. At the same time, the number of users in older age groups<sup>2</sup> is rising. More than half of these increases,

1 DIVSI Internet Milieu Study 2016.  
2 DZI Digital Index 2016. The DZI Digital Index is a continuation of the (N)Online Atlas published since 2002. It records the internet usage of the German-speaking resident population over 14 years of age according to socio-demographic criteria (approx. 70 million persons out of an estimated total population of 82.8 million at the end of 2016). The DZI Digital Index, which has been published annually by initiative DZI since 2013, provides qualitative information on internet use. Generalised statements on internet use by all over 50- or 60-year-olds are too inaccurate, because in the older age groups, the proportion of online users per decade of life is rapidly decreasing: in 2016, it will still be 83% for 50- to 59-year-olds, 69% for 60- to 69-year-olds and only 35% for over 70-year-olds. Among those under 50 years of age, the proportion of online users in 2016 is over 90%, among those under 30 years of age, almost 100% use of the Internet can be assumed.

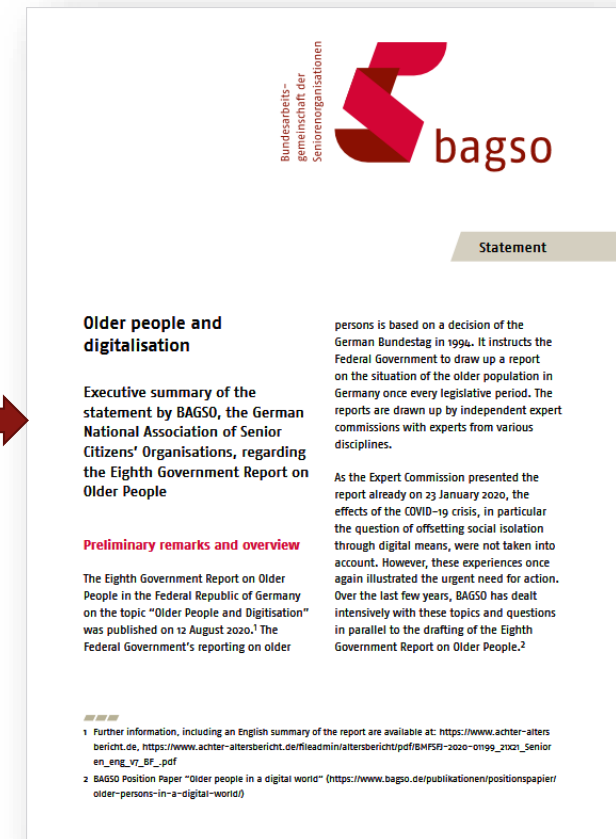


Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Think, learn and act across generations – our future society.

**Older People and Digitisation**  
Findings and recommendations from the Eighth Government Report on Older People

bmfjsf.de



**Statement**

**Older people and digitalisation**

**Executive summary of the statement by BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations, regarding the Eighth Government Report on Older People**

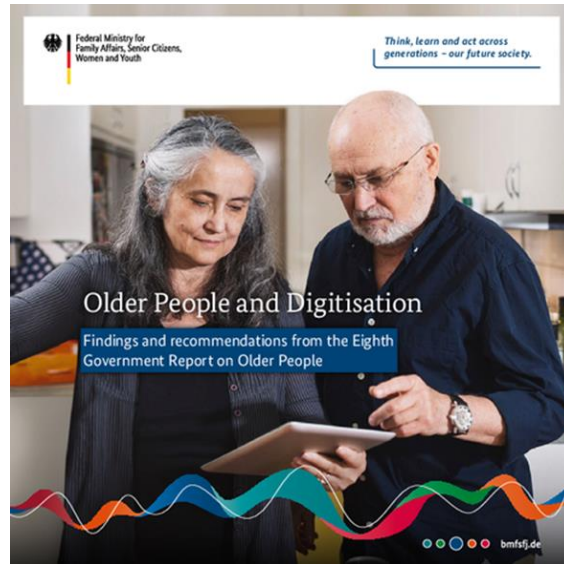
**Preliminary remarks and overview**

The Eighth Government Report on Older People in the Federal Republic of Germany on the topic "Older People and Digitisation" was published on 12 August 2020.<sup>1</sup> The Federal Government's reporting on older persons is based on a decision of the German Bundestag in 1994. It instructs the Federal Government to draw up a report on the situation of the older population in Germany once every legislative period. The reports are drawn up by independent expert commissions with experts from various disciplines.

As the Expert Commission presented the report already on 23 January 2020, the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular the question of offsetting social isolation through digital means, were not taken into account. However, these experiences once again illustrated the urgent need for action. Over the last few years, BAGSO has dealt intensively with these topics and questions in parallel to the drafting of the Eighth Government Report on Older People.<sup>2</sup>

1 Further information, including an English summary of the report are available at: <https://www.achter-altersbericht.de>, [https://www.achter-altersbericht.de/fileadmin/altersbericht/pdf/BMFSFJ-2020-0199\\_21x21\\_Senior\\_en\\_eng\\_v7\\_EF.pdf](https://www.achter-altersbericht.de/fileadmin/altersbericht/pdf/BMFSFJ-2020-0199_21x21_Senior_en_eng_v7_EF.pdf)  
2 BAGSO Position Paper "Older people in a digital world" (<https://www.bagso.de/publikationen/positionspapier/older-persons-in-a-digital-world/>)

# The 12 Commission's recommendations



1. Significantly increase the priority enjoyed by older people in the Federal Government's implementation strategy "Shaping digitisation"
2. Enable access to and use of digital technologies for all
3. Promote the opportunities posed by digitisation with regard to intergenerational communication
4. Reinforce digital sovereignty
5. Understand digital technologies as an opportunity both for older people with care-related needs and for their carers
6. Ensure the establishment and ongoing development of digital public services at local government level

# The 12 Commission's recommendations



7. Promote digital skills within occupational groups relevant to older people
8. Enable discussion on the ethical questions arising out of digitization
9. Ensure that research into and development of digital technologies takes into account the skills, needs and requirements of older people
10. Ensure sufficient funding for innovation and innovation transfer
11. Strengthen consumer protection
12. Introduce a monitoring system on “Digitisation and older people”

# BAGSO Policy recommendations

## 1. Providing access and enabling opportunities

- BAGSO views access to the Internet and web-based services as **essential public service elements of today's society**.
- Provide **free access** to the Internet **in public spaces**; Internet access also in assisted living facilities, in retirement and nursing homes and in health care facilities.
- The **right to participation** must be guaranteed **for people who do not use digital technologies**. Also: no disadvantages for non-users when using (municipal) services (also in public transport, banks, etc.)
- Support the acquisition of an Internet access and a device for **people on low incomes**
- **Provide opportunities to experience, test and learn** in every municipality
- Local authorities should **reward voluntary initiatives** by providing public spaces, technology and train-the trainer programs

# BAGSO Policy recommendations

## 2. Reducing barriers and creating trust

- Educational measures must ensure that **opportunities and risks are presented in context**, so that balanced judgements can emerge.
- **Strengthen consumer protection:** Security should no longer be the primary or even the sole responsibility of consumers. → Urge the Tech industry to offer only products and services that meet generally accepted security standards and warranty criteria.
- **To developers and service providers:** participatory design; Usability (constant user-interfaces), Learnability (user-friendly operating instructions, easy-to-understand-language), ensure security and reliability, focus on the careful handling of their users' data, transparency of the data traffic between devices and manufacturers
- **Software business models:** option to pay with money instead of data

# BAGSO Policy recommendations

## 3. Shouldering responsibility

- An **open dialogue** between policymakers, developers, the media and older adults
- **Public media**: Education about opportunities and risks in the digital world; educational formats on TV
- **Housing**: combine barrier-free housing development with the implementation of technologies in the apartments
- Unlock the opportunities presented by digitisation for the **health and care** of older adults and their carers
- Considerable need for **research** on the topic of “old age and digitisation” to better assess the benefits and impact of digital technologies in the everyday lives of older people
- BAGSO would like to see **ethical issues** in the use of digital technologies to be discussed at an early stage and with the involvement of those who will use the technologies.

# BAGSO Policy recommendations

## 4. Creating structures and promoting digital literacy

The education landscape for older adults to acquire digital literacy is not available nationwide, is unequally distributed across Germany and lacks professionalism.

- A (nationwide) **strategy for digital education** in old age with appropriate didactic concepts (from educational gerontologists)
- **Adequate funding**: setting up a “Digital Pact for Old Age” at federal level
- **Data and research** on learning and education of older adults
- Definition, operationalization and continuous **measurement of digital literacy in old age**
- **Evaluation** of existing educational formats, further **development, transfer** of good practice
- Nationwide provision of low-threshold **learning opportunities** for older adults carried out **by professionals** trained in media education who take into account the **diversity of older people**
- Promote digital skills within occupational groups relevant to older people (social workers, nursing staff...)

**Contact**



**Thank You.  
Please get in touch!**

Janina Stiel  
German National Association  
of Senior Citizens' Organisations  
Project Manager Digitalization and Education  
stiel@bagso.de  
Tel.: +49 228/249993-34  
www.bagso.de

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth