

FAREWELL

The last two years have been a challenge due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless, partner organisations of the My e-Start project – CATRO from Bulgaria, Apricot Training Management Ltd from the United Kingdom, the Center for Social Innovation (CSI) from Cyprus and Bupnet and Landkreiss Kassel from Germany – persevered to successfully develop the tools and guides that contribute to bridging the digital gap in Europe.

THE JOURNEY

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Our team wanted to create an online course that would support digitally excluded individuals to become familiar with the online world – its threats and opportunities – and become more able and confident to use e-government and e-commerce services in their country.

To do so, we first analysed the digital competences based on the DigComp 2.1 Framework that are necessary for a user to be able to autonomously conduct their own online transactions. We also identified that the greatest need was found to be among older persons and those with a low level of education or a migrant background. We then surveyed 26 popular services in all partner countries – with prevalence given to those considered most relevant to this target group of disadvantaged adults. Based on the identified competence areas, needs and most popular services, we started developing six learning units, specifically:

- Module 1:** Browsing, searching and finding information
- Module 2:** Safety, security and digital identity
- Module 3:** Communication & assistance
- Module 4:** Online payments
- Module 5:** e-Government
- Module 6:** Practical use – e-Commerce

Each module contains explanatory videos, step-by-step guidance, descriptive text about basic internet concepts and ideas, quizzes, and self-directed activities.

All the above were compiled and uploaded to an online platform, where access is free to all.

The next step involved completion of the online course by users from all cooperating countries (Germany, UK, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Austria). They provided us with feedback to improve the user-friendliness and functionality of the platform.

After testing the platform with these local users, we proceeded to develop a Manual for Trainers. The wide experience of the project partnership with the target groups has underlined the added value. In addition to the Manual's potential for increasing sustainability of the online course, it provides guidance and additional materials for trainers of the target group. For internet novices in particular, a face-to-face blended delivery of the online course will be even more beneficial – where trainers use the Manual resources to deliver additional introductory and reinforcing content, as well as support during completion of the online course.



ACCESS TO My e-Start RESOURCES

FOR LEARNERS

To access the My e-Start e-course, visit: <https://my-estart.dieberater.com/>

The course is available in English, Greek, Bulgarian and German.

FOR EDUCATORS

To access the Manual for Trainers and accompanying materials, visit: <https://my-estart.eu/manual-for-trainers/>

The manual is also available in Greek, Bulgarian and German.

OUR WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY

With the conclusion of the project, more public gatherings were held across the partnership countries. These were attended by adult educators, trainers, people of advanced age and local stakeholders – such as municipalities, labour rights and digital skills experts.

Bulgaria

CATRO Bulgaria organised their multiplier event on September 28, 2022, inviting trainers from the largest national VET centre (DBBZ) and the National Employment Agency. More than 20 labour experts and teachers in different fields joined the event. The aim of the event was to familiarise those who had not tested the My e-Start platform with the project aims and results, as well as place these in the larger context and role of education in upskilling underprivileged adults and their digital competencies. The event lasted for more than two hours, including presentations by the CATRO team and the facilitation of a World Café event where the participants had a chance to better get to know each other, and brainstorm some ideas on how they could best utilise the open-educational resources (OER) developed during the project. They talked about the roots of the digital gap issue, why it is important to address it, and how it can be alleviated. The CATRO team made sure to record the outcomes of this activity, and facilitated a great wrap-up discussion in the end of the event.



September 28, 2022, Bulgaria

All of this was a culmination of the pilot testings carried out in the previous months. Both the National Employment Agency and DBBZ became involved in the project and will ensure its sustainability. Currently, the outlook is that the My e-Start platform will be advertised in the entry halls of the agency, as well as by its labour consultants when they are working with clients. Furthermore, DBBZ will make sure to integrate it as an extra competence area in their curriculum that their educators can work on with their learners.

Germany

My e-Start joined forces with ten other European Union-funded projects and national initiatives for our final conference to form the REVEAL14 conference. The event was a great success. A total of 110 participants listened to exciting keynotes, visited an interactive exhibition with artefacts from all participating projects and attended stimulating workshops. The event was crowned by a highly acclaimed evening programme, including a storytelling event. We are delighted that we were able to end the project with such a highlight.

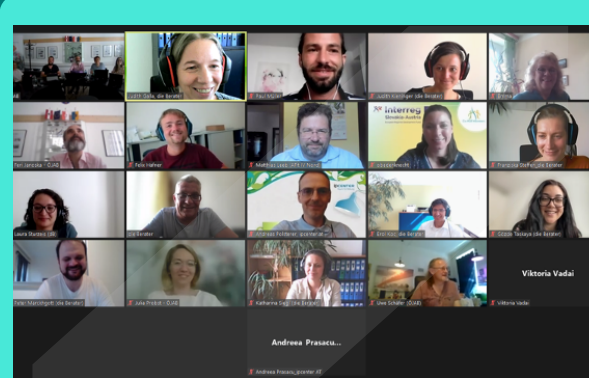


Reveal 14 Conference in Germany

Austria

In Austria, dieBerater organised an online gathering where the My e-Start e-course was presented in its German version. My e-Start was presented during a meeting with other relevant projects with similar focus. The 25 participants who took part in the online event seemed very interested in the results. Most of the participants were trainers who had the chance to share their opinion of the platform – its easy language approach was praised.

die Berater is also involved in other projects with vulnerable groups. The aim is to promote the My e-Start project in various other events and projects, to make it possible for people to access its compact, interactive information, incorporating varied activities.



United Kingdom

On September 29, 2022, Apricot Training Management Ltd hosted a dissemination event, at their offices in Loughborough (UK), to present My e-Start to a small group of interested local educators and stakeholders. The group was presented with an overview of issues associated with digital exclusion, along with the ways in which our project seeks to contribute to addressing some of these.

Attendees were familiarised with the content of the 'My e-Start Online Course' which provides learners with basic online digital knowledge and skills. In addition, they were introduced to the 'My e-start Manual for Trainers'. This is intended to give educators a background of the issue as well as a set of resources, including accompanying slide decks, to allow them to engage learners in a blended programme of learning. The blended programme is envisaged as being particularly useful for complete beginners who would struggle to independently access and use the online course.

Attendees, and some additional trainer-contacts, were subsequently invited to go on to review the 'My e-Start Manual for Trainers' in detail. In response to a question as to how likely they were to use or recommend these trainer resources, the average score exceeded 8 out of 10.

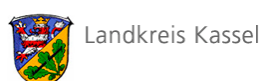
During piloting of the 'My e-Start Online Course', both novice and intermediate internet users reported increased e-skills, as well as greater confidence in accessing e-Government and e-Commerce services.

IMPACT OF My e-Start

The testing phase of the results of the project (My e-Start e-course and Manual for Trainers) helped us reach some important conclusions. The first was the importance of providing a blended learning approach rather than a purely online delivery, particularly for the completely novice internet-user. Another finding was that only in the rarest of cases does the target group of My e-Start have their own computer hardware. Most participants own neither a PC nor a notebook. It is therefore advisable to integrate My e-Start into existing courses in which computers are provided.

The Manual for Trainers is one of the core products of the My e-Start project, as it brings together all the important results and makes them accessible. With this document we want to ensure that My e-Start remains visible and useful beyond the project's lifetime. Our aim is to have a positive impact by facilitating social participation for disadvantaged groups of people.

For this ambitious goal, we need your help. Only together with you can we achieve substantial changes to reduce the so-called digital gap in Europe. We have taken a first step. Now it is up to you to continue and build on what we have found.



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