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DIGITAL INEQUALITY AMONG EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND UKRAINE

Digital inequality remains one of the challenges characterizing the level of digital transformation in Europe. Despite pan-European and national regulations that should contribute to overcoming this problem, it remains both at the level of infrastructure (connection to the Internet) and at the level of digital skills of the population.

Thus, the level of connection to high-speed Internet connection as well as to fixed broadband Internet differs significantly between individual EU countries (Figure 1).

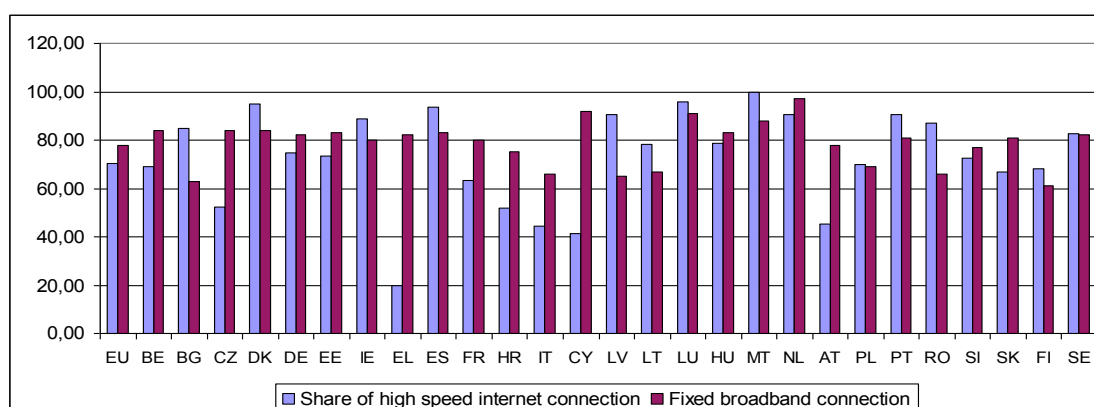


Figure 1 – Indexes of internet connection for EU-members

Source: constructed by authors based on data [1]

Northern European countries, Malta and Luxembourg are the leaders in terms of connectivity. The difference in the level of Internet connection affects the share of Internet users (Figure 2), although a significant share of the population uses mobile Internet. Thus, in Italy, which has a level of high-speed and broadband Internet not higher than 60 %, 82 % of the population are Internet users.

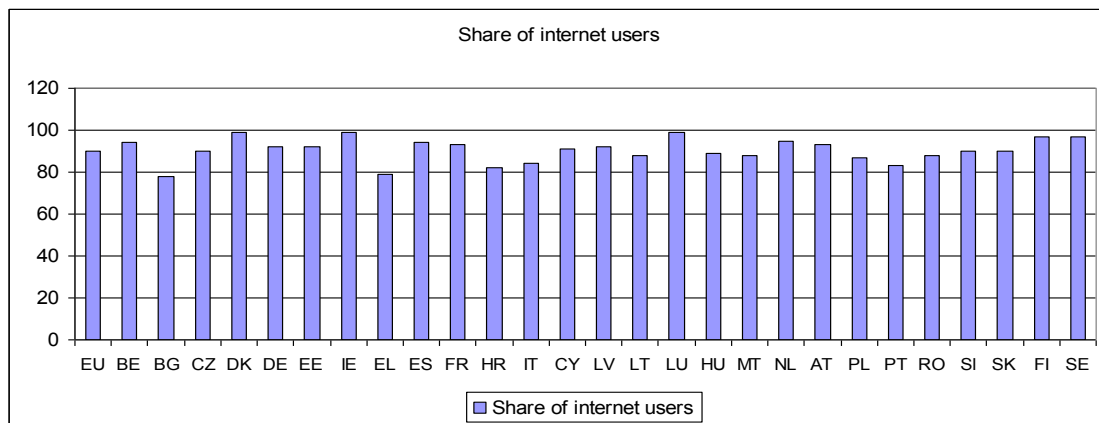


Figure 2 – Share of internet users among EU-members

Source: constructed by authors based on data [1]

The share of the population of European countries with an average and above-average level of digital skills is shown in Figure 3. Thus, the leaders in digital skills are Finland and the Netherlands, where the indicator is close to 80%. The outsider countries in terms of digital skills are Romania and Bulgaria – the indicator is about 30%.

For Ukraine the difference in Internet connection and level of digital skills for various regions and aging groups is significant. The share of people with access to the Internet in Ukraine in 2021 was 92 % (in 2019 – 88 %) [2]. Regarding the level of digital skills, the share of Ukrainians whose digital skills are at the basic level is 47.8 %, and the share of Ukrainians who do not have any digital skills is 11 %. At the same time, in the age group of 50-59 years, the share of the population with the level of basic and above basic digital skills is only 39%, and in the age group of 60-70 years – 19 %. Communication and information skills in 2021 for 79.2 %, the level of communication skills is above the basic level.

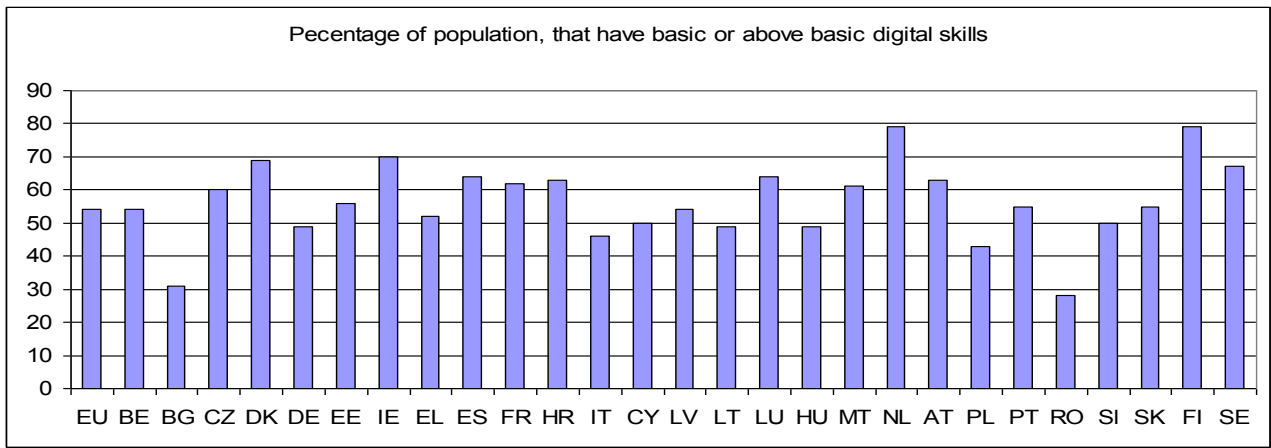


Figure 3 – Share of population, that have basic or above basic digital skills

Source: constructed by authors based on data [1]

Although only 37 % of the population has a level of creating digital content above the basic level [2].

The EU is working to make the Internet more accessible and to promote multilingualism on the Internet. Over the last decade, the EU has invested more than 200 million euros in this area. The Connecting Europe Facility, which has an electronic translation service, was also launched.

With the help of different approaches, the expected results should be the same in European countries: to overcome the digital divide that exists in societies. This applies to the oldest groups, the poorest and those living in rural areas. These three groups are key for government action in this area as they are most likely to be digitally vulnerable.

References

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