

# **Ageing in digital societies: enablers and barriers to older persons exercising their social rights**

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# 1 Legal and policy framework

## 1.1 National legislation on digital public administration

There is no specific national legislation on digital public administration that mentions equal access for all or specific groups (e.g. older persons or persons with disabilities).<sup>1</sup>

The act of 28 May 2019<sup>2</sup> on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies transposed Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of 26 October 2016<sup>3</sup> into Luxembourgish law. Accordingly, article 3 (1) of the abovementioned act requires public sector bodies to take the necessary measures to improve the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies to make them perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.<sup>4</sup>

The text of the abovementioned act generally focuses on accessibility for people with disabilities and does not directly address or mention older people at risk of digital exclusion. However, according to bill n°7351, it ultimately benefits all citizens by improving access to public sector services and information via websites and mobile applications. The act does not indicate a list of all the different groups that can benefit from it as it is addressed to all citizens.<sup>5</sup> This is reiterated in the Luxembourgish Digital Public Administration Factsheet.<sup>6</sup>

In accordance with article 5, public sector bodies have to provide and regularly update a clear, detailed and comprehensive accessibility declaration on the conformity of websites and mobile applications with regards to the formulated accessibility requirements – including links to the Information and Press Service as well as to the Ombudsman of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. In this context, article 6 also stipulates that the Information and Press Service periodically monitors the compliance of the respective websites and mobile applications. As further stated in article 7, the Information and Press Service is further responsible to provide a contact form for anyone wishing to make a complaint about non-compliance by a public sector body.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2021), [Digital public administration factsheet 2021 – Luxembourg](#), Brussels, October 2021, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Luxembourg, [The Act on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies \(Loi du 28 mai 2019 relative à l'accessibilité des sites internet et des applications mobiles des organismes du secteur public\)](#), 28 May 2019.

<sup>3</sup> [Directive \(EU\) No. 2016/2102](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies.

<sup>4</sup> Luxembourg, [The Act on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies \(Loi du 28 mai 2019 relative à l'accessibilité des sites internet et des applications mobiles des organismes du secteur public\)](#), 28 May 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Luxembourg, Chamber of Deputies (*Chambre des Députés*) (2018), [Bill on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies](#), Parliamentary document n°7351/00, 10 August 2018, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2021), [Digital Public Administration factsheet 2021 – Luxembourg](#), October 2021, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Luxembourg, [The Act on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies \(Loi du 28 mai 2019 relative à l'accessibilité des sites internet et des applications mobiles des organismes du secteur public\)](#), 28 May 2019.

## 1.2 National policy, strategy or action plan on the digitalisation of public services or digital inclusion

At the beginning of 2021, the “Electronic Governance Strategy 2021-2025” was adopted by the Government Council.<sup>8</sup> It recognises the right to equal access to public services undergoing digitalisation regardless of the respective competences and devices at hand. In this sense, the strategy aims at a higher inclusiveness and accessibility of online services, for instance through the use of easy-to-read language and the adaptation to the needs of the older population and persons with disabilities.<sup>9</sup> Regarding equal access for older people, the “Electronic Governance Strategy 2021-2025” additionally outlines both, possible risks of digital exclusion and potential benefits for this specific population group. On the one hand, it acknowledges the gap in digital literacy between younger and older generations and the need to provide stronger encouragement and guidance to enable older people to fully benefit from digital public services. On the other hand, the possible benefits for people with reduced mobility (either due to disability or age) through remote access to public services are emphasised.<sup>10</sup>

Further, the “National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion”, which was adopted in September 2021, acknowledges the following population groups as vulnerable to digital exclusion: older persons, persons with disabilities, unskilled workers, unemployed people, low-income populations, migrants, applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, women and girls –who are often affected by a digital literacy gap compared to men – as well as some youth who lack basic digital skills.<sup>11</sup> The National Action Plan outlines different initiatives to ensure equal treatment of these population groups, including older people. Inter alia, it is highlighted that analogue alternatives to digital solutions must remain guaranteed.<sup>12</sup> Further, a number of solutions for successful digital inclusion that cater a variety of population groups are listed: i) decentralised trainings for groups and individuals; ii) physical helpdesks; iii) digital public spaces; iv) the possibility to delegate another person to carry out the digital public service; and v) the development of tutorials and explanatory videos.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.3 National recovery and resilience plans covering the digitalisation of public services

The Luxembourgish National recovery and resilience plan provides information on a planned update of the national portal website “guichet.lu”/“myguichet.lu” with an increased availability of digital services, video-conferencing for appointments and an enhanced mobile app.<sup>14</sup> In the framework of the recovery

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<sup>8</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [Electronic Governance Strategy 2021-2025](#) (*Stratégie Gouvernance électronique 2021-2025*), February 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [Electronic Governance Strategy 2021-2025](#) (*Stratégie Gouvernance électronique 2021-2025*), February 2021, pp. 25-26.

<sup>10</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [Electronic Governance Strategy 2021-2025](#) (*Stratégie Gouvernance électronique 2021-2025*), February 2021, pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion – For a digitally inclusive society](#), 24 September 2021, p.10.

<sup>12</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion – For a digitally inclusive society](#), 24 September 2021, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion – For a digitally inclusive society](#), 24 September 2021, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry of Finance (2021), [Luxembourg’s recovery and resilience plan](#) (*Plan pour la reprise et la résilience du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*), June 2021, pp. 85-89.

and resilience plan, it is highlighted that the envisioned investments related to the modernisation of public administration shall ensure equal access to public services for people with low digital skills, older persons and people without smartphones.<sup>15</sup> In general, the promotion of digital inclusion is one of the strategic axes of the Luxembourgish ministry for Digitalisation in its role as facilitator and coordinator for other ministers regarding digitalisation and eGovernment.<sup>16</sup>

## 2 Programmes and practices aimed at ensuring equal access to public services in the digital age

Regarding the facilitation of access to digital public services, the Government IT Centre (*CTIE – Centre de technologies et de l’information de l’Etat*) develops and disseminates information pages in easy-to-read language on digital administrative procedures on the national portal website “guichet.lu” on an ongoing basis.<sup>17</sup> As of 31 March 2022, 18 such information sheets on a variety of administrative procedures were available on “guichet.lu”.<sup>18</sup> The platform “Simplify together” (*Zesummen vereinfachen*) further allows to submit proposals to simplify the presentation of administrative procedures on websites of public bodies. The first two projects available on the platform concern the national portal website guichet.lu (and myguichet.lu) as well as the connected mobile application.<sup>19</sup>

Founded 30 years ago as the Centre for Ageing Matters (*Center fir Altersfroen*) on the initiative of the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region, today, the association Gero – Gerontological Competence Centre (*Kompetenzzenter fir den Alter*) promotes innovative approaches with a positive influence on the lives of older people in Luxembourg – including activities related to digital inclusion.<sup>20</sup> On a continuous basis, the Gerontological Competence Centre offers, e.g., workshops and individual trainings tailored to the specific needs concerning digital skills. Furthermore, consultations and information sessions for older people are offered.<sup>21</sup> For May 2022 for instance, a test group of 12 older people is organised on request of the Luxembourgish Ministry for Digitalisation to evaluate public websites and enhance their accessibility.<sup>22</sup>

In Esch-sur-Alzette, the Information Office for special needs and senior citizens (*BiBSS – Bureau d’information Besoins Spécifiques et Seniors*), together with the city of Esch launched the “E-senior”

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<sup>15</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry of Finance (2021), [Luxembourg’s recovery and resilience plan](#) (*Plan pour la reprise et la résilience du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*), June 2021, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2021), [Digital Public Administration factsheet 2021 – Luxembourg](#), Brussels, October 2021, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation, [A necessary step towards inclusion – Guichet.lu in easy-to-read language](#) (*Un pas essentiel vers l’inclusion: Guichet.lu se lance dans le langage facile*), 2 December 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Luxembourg, National portal website “guichet.lu”, [Easy-to-read language](#) (*Leichte Sprache*).

<sup>19</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2022), [“Simplify together”: the platform to actively participate in the administrative simplification of the Luxembourgish State](#) (*“Zesumme vereinfachen”: la plateforme pour participer activement à la simplification administrative de l’État luxembourgeois*), 15 March 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Luxembourg, Gero – Gerontological Competence Centre, [Our association and its missions](#) (*Notre association et ses missions*), Luxembourg.

<sup>21</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation, [Gero a.s.b.l.](#), public website “together digital” (*Zesummen digital*).

<sup>22</sup> Gero – Gerontological Competence Centre, [Test group for different public websites](#) (*Recherche groupe test pour diff. sites internet étatiques*), Luxembourg.

project. The project aims to teach and promote digital literacy in the generation 55+. This is achieved through workshops and video tutorials – which are also disseminated via a local TV station to reach people without access to the internet. The project received funding from the Ministry for Digitalisation and the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region and was selected as a promising practice in the framework of the call for projects “Senior-friendly municipalities” (*Seniorenfreundliche Gemeinden – Communes amies des Seniors*).<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, on 14 January 2022 the Ministry for Digitalisation launched its 2022 call for projects on national level promoting digital inclusion in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The call is part of the implementation strategy of the National Action Plan for Digital Inclusion and, inter alia, aims at financing projects that promote digital accessibility, projects with the aim to involve and support people with no or few digital skills, and projects encouraging the creation of physical contact points on national and municipal level. The call is directed to a broad range of actors, including associations, private bodies, public institutions, municipalities, inter-municipal unions, professional chambers, training centres and public research institutes. The selected projects will be implemented between July 2022 and July 2023.<sup>24</sup>

### **3 Research and data focused on equal access to public services in the digital age**

There is no information available with regards to the number of complaints registered in 2021 by the Ombuds institutions related to discrimination on the ground of old age in the context of access to public services.<sup>25</sup>

The current state of research regarding unequal access to public services undergoing or having completed digital transformation with respect to older persons in Luxembourg is generally scarce.

Based on a quantitative survey, conducted via telephone and online interviews, the Centre for Equal Treatment (*CET – Centre pour l'égalité de traitement*), together with the ILRes polling institute, conducted the fourth edition of the Discrimination Observatory (*Observatoire des discriminations*) in September 2020. From a representative sample of 1014 residents, 19 persons reported cases of discrimination linked to age and 7 reported cases linked to a mental or physical handicap during the three years prior to the survey period. However, no specific information on age-related discrimination connected to the access to public services is included in the report.<sup>26</sup>

Based on the yearly survey on the use of information and communication technologies, the Luxembourgish National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (STATEC), analysed the use of the national portal website “guichet.lu” and other state websites. As STATEC indicates, 46% of the people aged 65-74 – the oldest age group included in the analysis – interacted online with public authorities in 2020. Further, 72% of the people in this age group are familiar with the national portal

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<sup>23</sup> Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities (*Syvicol – Syndicat des Villes et Communes Luxembourgeoises*) (2021), ["E-senior": facilitate access of older people to the digital world](#) (*"E-Senior": faciliter l'accès des personnes âgées au monde numérique*), Luxembourg, 22 June 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Luxembourg, Ministry for Digitalisation (2021), [Call for projects promoting digital inclusion](#) (*Appel à projets pour l'inclusion numérique*), 14 January 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Luxembourg, Telephone communication of FRANET Luxembourg with the office of the Luxembourgish Ombudsman (18 April 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Centre for Equal Treatment (*Centre pour l'égalité de traitement*) (2020), [Discrimination Observatory 2020](#) (*Observatoire des discriminations*), Luxembourg, 1 December 2020, p. 6.

website “guichet.lu”. Regarding the use of the portal website, it is indicated that, in 2020, 37% of the people aged 65-74 used the general portal website (guichet.lu) and 25% used the secure access to Luxembourg State’s online services (myguichet.lu).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (STATEC – *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*) (2020), [Online administration in the Grand Duchy: Guichet.lu adopted by internet users](#) (*L’administration en ligne au Grand-Duché : Guichet.lu adopté par les internautes*), Luxembourg, December 2020.

## 4 State of digitalisation of selected public services

		Selected public services relevant for older persons			
		Access to health records	Public statutory pensions	Housing aid	Other (as relevant in your context)
Stage of digitalisation	Not digitalised (Y/N)	N	N	N	n.a.
	Information is available online (Y/N)	Y – on the national portal website <a href="http://guichet.lu">guichet.lu</a> & the website of the eHealth Agency ( <i>Agence eSanté</i> ) <a href="http://e-santé.lu">e-santé.lu</a> .	Y – on the national portal website <a href="http://guichet.lu">guichet.lu</a> .	Y – on the national portal website <a href="http://guichet.lu">guichet.lu</a> and the website of the Ministry of Housing <a href="http://logement.lu">logement.lu</a> .	n.a.
	Transactions are possible online (Y/N)	Y – via the Luxembourgish eHealth record called “Shared Medical File” ( <i>Dossier de Soins Partagé</i> ).	N – Note: information, contact details and Interactive forms available for download online (but submission by mail).	Y – via the national portal website <a href="http://guichet.lu">guichet.lu</a> . This includes:  Applying for <a href="#">financial aid for special home adaptations for the physically disabled</a> including eTracking of the application on <a href="http://myguichet.lu">myguichet.lu</a> .  Consultation of personal data regarding housing aid on <a href="http://myguichet.lu">myguichet.lu</a> .	n.a.
Recognition of groups at risk of digital exclusion	Service specific regulation recognises barriers to digital inclusion / vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Y/N).	N <sup>28</sup>	N	N	n.a.

<sup>28</sup> Luxembourg, note: [The Grand-Ducal Regulation of 6 December 2019 specifying the modalities and conditions of implementation of the shared medical file](#) does not specifically address groups at risk of digital exclusion. However, the regulation stipulates that **every patient to whom a shared medical file is linked** has the rights to consult the data included in his shared medical file (Article 6 (1)), to oppose the sharing of data in the file (Article 3(1)), and to close the file at any time (Article 4 (1)).



	<b>If yes, please list the barriers and groups that are mentioned.</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n.a.
<b>Multichannel access options</b>	<b>Telephone service (Y/N)</b>  <b>If yes, please describe what kind of personalised services it provides.</b>	<b>Y</b> – Telephone service of the <a href="#">eHealth helpdesk</a> ( <i>helpdesk eSanté</i> ).  Support provided:  Opening and activation of the eHealth record, connection to the eHealth record, closing of the eHealth record, general information and information on functions of the eHealth record.	<b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Helpdesk</a> of national portal website “guichet.lu” (Information on digital administrative procedures)  <a href="#">Telephone hotline</a> of the National Pension Insurance Fund. (information on administrative procedures, appointments for the public counters)	<b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Helpdesk</a> of national portal website “guichet.lu” (Information on digital administrative procedures)  Telephone hotline of the <a href="#">Single Counter for Housing Aid</a> ( <i>Guichet unique des aides au logement</i> ); Opening hours: Monday to Friday: 8:00-16:00 (Information concerning individual housing aid, information about useful addresses for all relevant institutions regarding housing).	n.a.
	<b>Physical administrative access points (Y/N).</b>  <b>If yes, please specify the level of availability (local, regional, national), the opening days and hours.</b>	<b>Y</b> – Location: Physical eHealth helpdesk ( <i>helpdesk eSanté</i> ) (national) in the social security building (Luxembourg city).  Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8:00-16:00  Languages; Luxembourgish, French, German, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Romanian.  Support provided: Opening and activation of the eHealth record, connection to the eHealth record, closing of the eHealth record, general information and information on functions of the eHealth record.	<b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Public counters</a> of the National Pension Insurance Fund (national) in Luxembourg city. (by appointment)	<b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Single Counter for Housing Aid</a> ( <i>Guichet unique des aides au logement</i> ) in Luxembourg city (national)  Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8:00-12:00 and 13:30-17:30; Thursday 8:00-17:30. individual housing aid, information about useful addresses for all relevant institutions regarding housing.	n.a.

	<p><b>Specific locations</b> that facilitate <b>offline</b> access to the service (Y/N)</p> <p><b>If yes</b>, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.</p>	<p><b>Y</b> – Possibility to access the personal eHealth record together with health professionals during consultations through an individual “<a href="#">presence code</a>”.</p>	-/-	-/-	n.a.
	<p><b>Specific locations</b> that facilitate <b>online</b> access to the service (Y/N).</p> <p><b>If yes</b>, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.</p>	<p><b>Y</b> – eHealth helpdesk (<a href="#">helpdesk eSanté</a>) via online video consultations</p> <p>Support provided:</p> <p>Opening and activation of the eHealth record, connection to the eHealth record, closing of the eHealth record, general information and information on functions of the eHealth record.</p>	<p><b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Physical reception desk</a> of the “guichet.lu”</p> <p>Support provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guide citizens in their daily administrative undertakings;</li> <li>• help citizens find answers to their queries;</li> <li>• determine the documents required to complete each procedure or formality;</li> </ul> <p>guide the citizen to the appropriate contact person or service</p>	<p><b>Y</b> – <a href="#">Physical reception desk</a> of the “guichet.lu”</p> <p>Support provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guide citizens in their daily administrative undertakings;</li> <li>• help citizens find answers to their queries;</li> <li>• determine the documents required to complete each procedure or formality;</li> </ul> <p>guide the citizen to the appropriate contact person or service</p>	n.a.
	<p><b>Other</b> – please indicate any other access channels to the service.</p>	<p>Possibility to entrust a specific person (<a href="#">assistant DSP</a>) with equal access rights to assist regarding the access to the eHealth record.</p>	-/-	-/-	n.a.
<p><b>Other forms of support for online use</b></p>	<p>Please indicate any other <b>form of support to facilitate the use of the online service</b> for older persons such as easy-to-read versions, different language versions, etc.</p>	<p>Information on website of the eHealth Agency on the eHealth record provided in Luxembourgish, French, German and English.</p> <p>Information on “guichet.lu” on the eHealth record provided in French, German and English.</p>	<p>Information on “guichet.lu” is provided in French, German and English.</p>	<p>Information on “guichet.lu” is provided in French, German and English.</p>	n.a.

