

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

Slovenia

June 2022

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1 Legal and policy framework

1.1 National legislation on digital public administration

No legislation specifically prohibiting discrimination regarding access to public services undergoing digitalisation could be identified. Similarly, legislation specifying equal access to public services subject to digitalisation could not be identified.

Recently, however, the National Assembly passed the Promotion of Digital Inclusion Act (*Zakon o spodbujanju digitalne vključenosti*). The bill guarantees access to measures promoting digital inclusion for all targeted groups under equal conditions. The purpose of the law is to increase the digital inclusion of the population of the Republic of Slovenia. Digital inclusion is defined as the ability of individuals to access the available information and communication infrastructure and digital technologies, solutions and services, use them competently and securely, trust them and thus actively participate in the information society. Measures to promote digital inclusion are targeted at groups at risk of the greatest deviation from the target level of digital competences and those where it is expected that increasing the level of their digital competences will enable the greatest social progress. The target groups mostly include children, pupils and students, but also other job seekers (i.e. an economically active or inactive person or a student seeking employment), **pensioners** and persons with disabilities. Amongst others, envisaged measures include subsidies for increasing digital competences, support or implementation of educational and promotional campaigns and distribution of digital vouchers for the purchase of computer equipment or participation in educational programmes for the acquisition of digital competences.¹

The Protection against Discrimination Act (*Zakon o varstvu pred diskriminacijo*), adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije*), is the principal national act in the field of anti-discrimination. It is a horizontal act providing for protection against discrimination in a variety of fields and on a variety of grounds, including age and disability. The act is binding on both public and private sector. According to the law, state authorities, local communities, holders of public authority, and legal and natural persons shall be bound by this act to ensure protection against discrimination and/or equal treatment of all persons in all areas of authoritative decision-making, legal transactions and their other activities or conduct in relation to third parties.²

¹ Slovenia, [The Promotion of digital inclusion act](#) (*Zakon o spodbujanju digitalne vključenosti*), 28 February 2022.

² Slovenia, [The Protection against discrimination act](#) (*Zakon o varstvu pred diskriminacijo*), 21 April 2016, and subsequent modifications.

The Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications Act (*Zakon o dostopnosti spletišč in mobilnih aplikacij*) regulates the measures and standards ensuring the accessibility of websites and mobile applications for all users, in particular for those with disabilities. The bill applies to state bodies, bodies of local self-government and bodies governed by public law as defined by the law governing public procurement.³

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

In Slovenia, no specific policy document on the digitalisation of public services or digital inclusion has been adopted as of yet. The umbrella document in this field, Digital Slovenia 2020 - Development strategy for the information society until 2020, was launched in 2016. The strategy lists inclusive digital society amongst its priority areas. According to the strategy, in order to establish an inclusive digital society, activities should be directed towards the most unprivileged in the field of ICT skills and competences, namely groups with lower educational attainment, **older people**, unemployed persons, persons with special needs, minorities and immigrants. Better e-inclusion and enabling the access to e-services to all groups of population, especially less educated, older persons, persons with disabilities and inactive persons are thus set out amongst strategic objectives of the strategy in this field. Amongst others, the envisaged measures include the following: support for activities of non-governmental organisations aiming at the development of an inclusive digital society; support for projects of digital literacy, including individual education workshops for groups with different capacities; support for projects aimed at developing and strengthening of services supported by modern technologies for ageing gracefully, provision of comprehensive care and promotion of living in domestic environment.⁴

A new strategy, Digital Slovenia 2030, is being developed but has not been adopted as of yet.⁵

³ Slovenia, [The Accessibility of websites and mobile applications act](#) (*Zakon o dostopnosti spletišč in mobilnih aplikacij*), 17 April 2018, and subsequent modifications.

⁴ Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2016), [Digital Slovenia 2020 - Development strategy for the information society until 2020](#), Ljubljana, Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

⁵ For more information, see the government webpage on the digitalisation of society on www.gov.si teme/digitalizacija-druzbe/.

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

In Slovenia, the national Recovery and resilience plan sets out digital transformation of public sector and public administration as one of the components of the cluster on digital transformation. This component involves six reforms (e.g. establishing conditions environment for the use of e-services of public administration) and eight investments (e.g. modernisation of the digital environment of public administration). According to the national plan, the purpose of the reforms and investments is to accelerate the digital transformation of public administration and the public sector in order to provide user-friendly and secure digital services. Electronic services shall be developed in cooperation with various stakeholders (**older persons**, youth and persons with special needs), who are to be involved in the process through their associations and organisations. With the investment in modernisation of the digital environment of public administration, new e-services shall be developed and existing ones shall be subject to optimisation, so as to put the user at the centre. Services shall be designed to support life events and to be proactive, with organised assistance for those who do not know how to use digital services or lack the opportunity to use them. Amongst others, such services shall be available for various devices and accessible to different user groups based on their specific needs and limitations.

The national plan also envisages that the healthcare component of the cluster on healthcare and social care involves the investment in the digitalisation of healthcare. Amongst others, objectives of the investment include the introduction of new digital services and digitalisation of existing services, as well as the use of information technology to communicate with patients and other stakeholders in the health system. The investment shall be implemented in such a manner as to ensure the inclusion of all residents. According to the national plan, in addition to the provision of digital services, the needs and capabilities of vulnerable groups shall also be taken into account. The document, however, does not further specify which specific vulnerable groups are covered. As per the national plan, in addition to customised websites and mobile applications and related transparent and easy-to-understand instructions, they shall have the possibility to use certain services via a call centre or already established ways, but the document does not further specify which particular services are to be available in such a manner.⁶

⁶ Služba Vlade Republike Slovenije za razvoj in evropsko kohezijsko politiko (2021), [Načrt za okrevanje in odpornost, Junij 2021](#), Ljubljana, Služba Vlade Republike Slovenije za razvoj in evropsko kohezijsko politiko.

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

The Institute for intergenerational cooperation Simbioza Genesis (*Zavod za medgeneracijsko sodelovanje Simbioza Genesis*), a social enterprise carries out digital literacy projects focusing on intergenerational cooperation. It was established in 2014 as a fruit of the initiative "Simbioz@ - e-literate Slovenia". The latter was a successful national e-literacy project implemented in the period 2011-2013, encouraging solidarity between generations and facilitating the first contacts of older people with digital technologies, namely young volunteers engaged with older people and taught them on how to use computers and mobile phone devices. Amongst others, the organisation currently carries out e-literacy workshops aimed at older people which recently also included topics such as e-identity and access to certain public services (e.g. access to eGovernment portal and applying for ID card; access to zVEM patient portal). The organisation also produced a mobile app targeted at older people. Amongst other, the app includes a classroom with video tutorials on the use of a computer or a smartphone. In the form of a van, the organisation also operates a mobile classroom on wheels in order to reach older persons who usually cannot easily access educational resources and thus to bridge the educational gap in the field of ICT between urban and rural areas.⁷

The Union of Pensioners' Associations of Slovenia (*Zveza društev upokojencev Slovenije, ZDUS*), Slovenia's largest organisation of pensioners is the leading partner in the project "Digitally included" ("Digitalno vključeni"). The two-year project which started in the beginning of 2022 addresses the integration of older people into the information society, which is one of the significant challenges in Slovenia. The main aim of the project is to develop an intergenerational digital platform, the first of its kind in Slovenia, which will contribute to better digital literacy of older people, their better social inclusion and towards reducing the intergenerational digital divide. The platform will offer older people: (1) lifelong learning to acquire functional digital skills; (2) knowledge on the use of key e-services for the elderly; (3) access to content and programmes on active and healthy ageing and (4) participation and learning in intergenerational virtual meetings.⁸

⁷ For more information, see the webpage of the Institute for intergenerational cooperation Simbioza Genesis on <https://simbioza.eu/>.

⁸ For more information, see the webpage of the Union of Pensioners' Associations of Slovenia on <https://zdus-zveza.si/programi-in-projekti/digitalno-vkljuceni/>.

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

The Human Rights Ombudsman (*Varuh Človekovih pravic*) received no complaints relating to alleged discrimination on the ground of old age in access to public services in the context of digitalisation in 2020. In 2021, two relevant initiatives were submitted with the Ombudsman. In the first case, the petitioner wanted to contact the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (*Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije, ZPIZ*) via telephone, but failed due to various obstacles. The complainant stated that they were not skilled in using the telephone, that they did not have the internet, did not know how to use a computer, that they were being treated for Alzheimer's disease, and that it was difficult for them to write and talk. They stated that they called the ZPIZ in Ljubljana and Maribor, but received instructions over the phone that they had to press the numbers and enter the personal unique master citizen number (*enotna matična številka občana, EMŠO*), which they could not do, and they also had no one to help them. They also pointed out that at the time of the Covid-19 epidemic, they could not visit ZPIZ in person. The Ombudsman verified these allegations with ZPIZ. ZPIZ informed the Ombudsman that there were multiple channels to access the organisation, of which calling the contact centre tended to be the best, fastest and most accessible option for talking to an expert. ZPIZ also noted that entering additional identifiers was optional and not mandatory. Amongst others, the Ombudsman confirmed that it was possible to access information even without entering additional identification data. The Ombudsman thus found that no discrimination took place.

In the second case, the complainant only submitted general complaints that older persons have difficulties in accessing various state bodies or services (municipality, doctor, tax administration). They pointed out that employees gave quick oral explanations over the phone that individuals failed to write down, and the same was said to be the case with information delivered via voicemail systems. It was also said that older persons face problems with electronic business with the authorities, so the complainants suggested that special help be available to them. The Ombudsman concluded this case by providing clarifications regarding these allegations. It explained the person concerned that they might want to approach the state authorities with their ideas on how to address the barriers older people face in relation to electronic business. The Ombudsman further explained the role of and the procedure before the Advocate of the Principle of Equality (*Zagovornik načela enakosti*), the national equality body, and the possibility of submitting a complaint in case the complainant

thought they were subject to discrimination. The Ombudsman also warned against negative stereotypes that older persons were not skilled in using new technologies or did not have access to them.⁹

The Advocate of the Principle of Equality saw no complaints relating to alleged discrimination on the ground of old age in access to public services in the context of digitalisation in 2020 in 2021.¹⁰

Research studies and surveys specifically addressing discrimination and ageing in the context of digitalisation are generally not available in Slovenia. Available survey data, however, show that digital participation of older people compares unfavourably to other age groups. For example, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Communication Office (*Urad Vlade Republike Slovenije za komuniciranje*) commissioned a national survey on digital competences which took place in January 2022. The sampling frame included mobile phone subscribers from a telephone directory. The telephone survey captured 606 people. The sample was subsequently subject to post-stratification so as to ensure harmonisation of the demographic structure of the sample by gender, education, region, age and size of the settlement according to the data from the 2021 register-based population census carried out by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (*Statistični urad Republike Slovenije*). As regards age group, the survey included 16.5 % of persons between 18-34 years of age, 38.8 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 44.7 % of persons aged 55 years and over. The survey, for example, shows that 25.6 % of persons in the last age group do not know how to use digital tools for oral and written communication, compared to 1.3 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 0 % of persons in the youngest age group. The survey also shows that 55.4 % of persons aged 55 years and over completely or almost completely agree that older persons and vulnerable groups find it more difficult to access knowledge in the field of digital skills. There are 43.2 % of respondents between 35-54 years of age and 42 % of respondents between 18-34 years of age who think the same about this issue. The survey also show that 31.2 % of respondents in the oldest age group possess a qualified digital certificate allowing for access to online services of the public administration, compared to 52.6 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 48 % of persons between 18-34 years of age. It further show that 20.1 % of respondents in the oldest age group are aware of and use online services of the public administration, compared to 35.3 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 25.3 % of persons between 18-34 years of age. As regards specific services, the survey, amongst others, show the following: a) 31.2 % of respondents in the oldest age group are aware of and

⁹ Information provided by the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Varuh človekovih pravic*) upon request (email, 5 May 2022).

¹⁰ Information provided by the Advocate of the Principle of Equality (*Zagovornik načela enakosti*) upon request (email, 12 May 2022, response dated 11 May 2022).

use eZdravje (i.e. health-related online service), compared to 44 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 35.4 % of persons between 18-34 years of age; b) 13.4 % of respondents in the oldest age group are aware of and use eZPIZ (i.e. online service related to the pension and disability insurance scheme), compared to 15.4 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 9.1 % of persons between 18-34 years of age; c) 17.5 % of respondents in the oldest age group are aware of and use eGovernment (*eUprava*) (i.e. national public portal for various services online and related to topics such as personal documents, family matters and social services), compared to 35.5 % of persons between 35-54 years of age and 26 % of persons between 18-34 years of age.¹¹

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia carries out regular annual surveys on the usage of ICT in households and by individuals. Observation unit is an individual aged 16–74 years and their households. The sampling frame includes the Central Population Register. The sample size is 4,000 persons.¹² The survey is representative for the population of Slovenia. The 2021 survey findings show, for example, that 31.17 % of persons aged 65-74 years have never used internet, compared e.g. to 13.2 % of persons aged 55-64 years and 2.34 % of persons aged 45-54 years. Compared to other age groups, persons aged 65-74 years are also less likely to use websites of public institutions and web portals of public administration. For example, 37.54 % of persons in this age used websites of public institutions (e.g. libraries, kindergartens, educational institutions, health institutions, ministries, administrative units, municipalities) in the last 12 months, compared to 57.54 % of persons aged 55-64 years, 78.37 % of individuals aged 45-55 years, 84.72 % of persons aged 35-44 years and e.g. 74.26 % of persons aged 16-24 years. In a similar vein, 16.22 % of persons aged 65-74 years used eGovernment portal in the last 12 months, compared to 25.52 % of persons aged 55-64 years, 45.49 % of individuals aged 45-55 years, 47.87 % of persons aged 35-44 years and e.g. 22.48 % of persons aged 16-24 years. The survey findings further show that 18.31 % of persons aged 65-74 years used other portals of public administration (e.g. eZPIZ, eZdravje/zVEM and other portals related to, for example, taxes or providing open data) in the last 12 months, compared to 34.31 % of persons aged 55-64 years, 50.79 % of individuals aged 45-55 years, 62.79 % of persons aged 35-44 years and e.g. 26 % of persons aged 16-24 years.¹³

¹¹ Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije (2022), [Raziskava javnega mnenja o digitalnih kompetencah: Poročilo o raziskavi](#), Urad Vlade Republike Slovenije za komuniciranje.

¹² For more information, see methodological explanation on the webpage of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (*Statistični urad Republike Slovenije*) on www.stat.si/statweb/File/DocSysFile/8098.

¹³ Data taken from SiStat data portal on <https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStat/en/Podrocja/Index/88/razvoj-in-tehnologija>.



4 State of digitalisation of selected public services

		Selected public services relevant for older persons			
		Access to health records	Public statutory pensions	Social benefits	Other (as relevant in your context)
Stage of digitalisation	Not digitalised (Y/N)	N zVEM, ¹⁴ a part of the national eHealth solutions, is a 'one-stop shop' portal for patients. A person can access their medical records and check the situation regarding prescriptions provided that they possess digital certificate. Checking waiting time for specific services and making appointments is also possible, but no certificate is needed.	N Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (<i>Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije</i> , ZPIZ) is the only provider and implementer of mandatory pension and disability insurance in Slovenia. Access to electronic services for insured persons and pensioners is available via eZPIZ portal. Amongst others, it is possible to submit applications, check the status of a case and look into insurance and remittance data, as well as to receive documents in an eBox, provided that a person holds digital	N For the purpose of this project, benefits as determined in the Exercise of Rights from Public Funds Act (<i>Zakon o uveljavljanju pravic iz javnih sredstev</i>) have been considered. ¹⁶ These include cash social assistance, income supplement, funeral payment and bereavement payment. Social work centres (<i>Centri za socialno delo</i>) administer these claims. Amongst others, access regarding these services is available on eGovernment (<i>eUprava</i>), a public portal of the Republic of Slovenia for citizens and an electronic	

¹⁴ For more information, see eZVEM web portal on <https://zvem.ezdrav.si/domov>.

¹⁶ Slovenia, [The Exercise of rights from public funds act](#) (*Zakon o uveljavljanju pravic iz javnih sredstev*), 15 July 2010, and subsequent modifications.

			certificate. E-requests for EVERYONE (eVloge za VSE) is another service allowing individuals to submit online requests and applications. A mobile number and email address shall suffice, and no digital certificate shall be needed. ¹⁵	entry point for various services provided by state bodies or public administration bodies. ¹⁷	
	Information is available online (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	
	Transactions are possible online (Y/N)	Y	Y	N There are application forms available online, but these should be eventually submitted via regular post or in person. ¹⁸	
Recognition of groups at risk of digital exclusion	Service specific regulation recognises barriers to digital inclusion / vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Y/N).	N ¹⁹	N ²⁰	N ²¹	

¹⁵ For more information, see webpages of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (*Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije*) on www.zpiz.si/content2020en/my-ezpiz1#x1 and www.zpiz.si/content2020en/forms#x1-

¹⁷ For more information, see eGovernment webpage on <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/sociala-zdravje-smrt.html>.

¹⁸ For more information, see eGovernment webpage on <https://e-uprava.gov.si/podrocja/sociala-zdravje-smrt.html>.

¹⁹ Slovenia, [The Healthcare databases act](#) (*Zakon o zbirkah podatkov s področja zdravstvenega varstva*), 11 July 2000, and subsequent modifications.

²⁰ Slovenia, [The General administrative procedure act](#) (*Zakon o splošnem upravnem postopku*), 16 September 1999, and subsequent modifications; Slovenia, [The Decree on administrative operations](#) (*Uredba o upravnem poslovanju*), 7 February 2018, and subsequent modifications.

²¹ Slovenia, [The General administrative procedure act](#) (*Zakon o splošnem upravnem postopku*), 16 September 1999, and subsequent modifications; Slovenia, [The Decree on administrative operations](#) (*Uredba o upravnem poslovanju*), 7 February 2018, and subsequent modifications.

	If yes, please list the barriers and groups that are mentioned.	/	/	/	
Multichannel access options	Telephone service (Y/N) If yes, please describe what kind of personalised services it provides.	Y There is a dedicated number which provide support to users of eHealth solutions, including eZVEM. ²² There is also a dedicated number with advisers making appointments for healthcare services for persons concerned. ²³ As regards appointments for healthcare services, for example, it is possible to make an appointment by placing a telephone call with any relevant healthcare provider during office hours. ²⁴	Y ZPIZ provides general information on the rights and obligations under the pension and disability insurance scheme. There are also dedicated numbers where information on various issues is provided (e.g. information on pension claims, information on the status of an individual claim, as well), as well as support for online services. ²⁵	Y Social works centres provide, amongst others, information on the conditions for obtaining a certain benefit, about the procedure, the documents to be attached to the application, and also provide help as regards the content of an application form. ²⁶	

²² For more information, see the webpage dedicated to the support of users of eHealth solutions on <https://podpora.ezdrav.si/>.

²³ For more information, see the webpage dedicated to the support of users on <https://podpora.ezdrav.si/e-narocanje/>.

²⁴ Slovenia, [The Rules on the referral of patients, the management of waiting lists, and the maximum permissible waiting times](#) (*Pravilnik o naročanju in upravljanju čakalnih seznamov ter najdaljših dopustnih čakalnih dobah*), 5 January 2018.

²⁵ For more information, see the webpage of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (*Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije*) on www.zpiz.si/cms/?ids=home2020en.

²⁶ Information provided by a representative of the Social work centre Ljubljana, Vič Rudnik unit (*Center za socialno delo Ljubljana, Enota Vič Rudnik*) upon request (telephone, 20 May 2022).

	<p>Physical administrative access points (Y/N). If yes, please specify the level of availability (local, regional, national), the opening days and hours.</p>	<p>Y Offline access to medical records shall be available at and provided by any relevant healthcare provider. Thus in general no healthcare provider in the country is necessarily excluded from this obligation.²⁷</p> <p>As regards appointments for healthcare services, for example, it is possible to make an appointment in person at any relevant healthcare provider during office hours.²⁸</p>	<p>Y There are 9 regional units and further 5 branches of certain regional units.²⁹</p> <p>The facilities are open for business with the customers on: MON – 8-12 and 13-15; WED – 8-12 and 13-17; FRI – 8-13.³⁰</p>	<p>Y There are 16 social work centres with 62 units across the country.</p> <p>The facilities are open for business with the customers on: MON – 8-12 and 13-15; WED – 8-12 and 13-17; FRI – 8-13.³¹</p>	
	<p>Specific locations that facilitate offline access to the service (Y/N) If yes, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.</p>	<p>Such facilities could not be identified.</p>	<p>Such facilities could not be identified.</p>	<p>Such facilities could not be identified.</p>	

²⁷ Slovenia, [The Patients' rights act](#) (*Zakon o pacientovih pravicah*), 29 January 2008, and subsequent modifications.

²⁸ Slovenia, [The Rules on the referral of patients, the management of waiting lists, and the maximum permissible waiting times](#) (*Pravilnik o naročanju in upravljanju čakalnih seznamov ter najdaljših dopustnih čakalnih dobah*), 5 January 2018.

²⁹ For more information, see the webpage of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (*Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije*) on www.zpiz.si/cms/content2019/obmone-enote.

³⁰ For more information, see the webpage of the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (*Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije*) on www.zpiz.si/cms/?ids=home2020en.

³¹ For more information, see the webpage of Slovenian social work centres on www.csd-slovenije.si/.

	<p>Specific locations that facilitate online access to the service (Y/N). If yes, indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.</p>	Such facilities could not be identified.	Such facilities could not be identified.	Such facilities could not be identified.	
	<p>Other – please indicate any other access channels to the service.</p>	/	/	/	
<p>Other forms of support for online use</p>	<p>Please indicate any other form of support to facilitate the use of the online service for older persons such as easy-to-read versions, different language versions, etc.</p>	/	<p>E-requests for EVERYONE are also available in Italian, Hungarian, English and German language. Amongst others, ZPIZ website also provides for information in sign language via links to YouTube tutorials. Information is also available via audio reader.</p>	<p>Some application forms on eGovernment portal are available in Italian and Hungarian language. Information is also available in English. Certain information is also available in sign language.</p>	