

SDG 4: IT training and education of elderly persons in France

Summary

According to the World Health Organization, 22% of the global population will be more than 60 years old in 2050. Today, the development of online procedures, for instance to fill one's tax return or to request social assistance, make it crucial for everyone to access and understand the use of IT devices and of the internet, especially vulnerable populations such as the elderly who are more likely to be left aside. Therefore, France focuses on developing concrete tools and making training opportunities available to the elderly, in order to improve their access to digital tools. This goal has translated into a national action plan launched in September, as well as several initiatives at a more local level, that aim at being generalized at the national level in a near future, depending on their impact.

Situation

There is a growing use of internet and digital technologies by seniors in France as in the rest of the world. According to the 2018 Digital Barometer (*Baromètre du numérique 2018*)[‡], 60% of the + 70 years old and 82% of the 60-69 years old report surfing on the internet, including respectively 45% and 63% having an every day use. However, one adult out of five reports never using IT tools because of difficulties to understand their functioning, while 36% of the + 70 and 23% of the 60-69 give up using them when they do not understand how they work. Since 2015 however, seniors can make use of their individual learning account (compte personnel de formation, CPF)—which allows a maximum of 150 hours of training over 9 years—to get IT training, although the account is automatically closed when a person exercises his/her rights to retirement.

Strategy

The national plan for an inclusive digitalization “For a connected France”[§], launched on 13 September 2018 by the Secretary of State for digitalization, aims at training the population to the use of digital technologies, first by training social workers and providing them with tools such as the “Rapid impact package”^{**} to help people go through administrative processes. The plan also launched the “digital pass” under the form of digital culture checks #APTIC, which allow their beneficiaries to follow free or discounted digital trainings and can be distributed by employers who wish to encourage their senior employees acquire digital competencies^{††}.

Other initiatives have been taken over the past years. For instance, computer science schools such as L'Ecole42 or Web@cadémie form seniors undergoing a career change to the main digital languages over a few weeks. Seniors can also learn how to code through online MOOCs like Code academy. As an example, Pôle Emploi has concluded a national agreement to allow job seekers to freely access Open classrooms classes for three months. The startup Geezkie puts in relation young teachers with seniors. Finally, a “digital bus”^{‡‡} crosses the French region Aquitaine to offer free 3-hour trainings to seniors to

[‡] <https://labo.societenumerique.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/barometredunumerique2018.pdf>

[§] [https://secretariat-
etat.numerique.gouv.fr/files/files/20180913%20DP_Plan%20national%20pour%20un%20num%C3%A9rique%20inclusif_SNNI%20VDEF2-
compressed.pdf](https://secretariat-etat.numerique.gouv.fr/files/files/20180913%20DP_Plan%20national%20pour%20un%20num%C3%A9rique%20inclusif_SNNI%20VDEF2-compressed.pdf)

^{**} <https://kit-inclusion.societenumerique.gouv.fr/>

^{††} <https://aptic.fr/>

^{‡‡} <http://www.lebusdigital.com/>

learn how to use IT tools (send emails, stay in touch with their family, fill their tax form, access their retirement account, etc.).

Results and lessons learned

- The plans and initiatives mentioned above are still quite recent, but some the first results suggest that they are bearing fruit.
- Contrary to popular thinking, the development of these types of strategies allowed us to realize that older persons are today massive users of IT tools and of the internet. However, they mainly use them as practical tools rather than for entertainment. The remaining gaps in terms of use of digital tools surely lies in disparities of access among the territories, as retired persons often live in rural areas. Therefore, special attention should be paid to these populations, and special trainings and personalized help should be developed in those areas in order to reach quality education for all.
- Today, one of the main challenges regarding life-long training is the increase in the retirement age. Indeed, companies have to rethink and invest in the training of their senior employees although they are not likely to stay for long. Therefore, they tend to ask less their seniors employees if they need or desire training. However, companies of more than 50 employees now have to set up “generation contracts”, where the senior employee is in charge of handing down its knowledge and competencies to a new young employee.

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