



CENTRUL ROMÂN
DE POLITICI EUROPENE
CRPE

DEFENDING EUROPE, PROVIDING EXPERTISE

Bridging the digital divide. Examples of good practice for inclusive digitalization



Photo by [Maac India](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Co-funded by
the European Union

Table of contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	6
Digital initiatives - private sector.....	7
1. Digitaliada	
2. Code Kids Programme	
3. Hi Digital – Vodafone	
4. The Științescu Fund	
Digital initiatives - public sector.....	16
1. Deva Municipality	
2. Iași Municipality	
3. Baia Mare Municipality	
4. București Municipality	
5. Oradea Municipality	
6. The Buzău County Council	
7. Cluj-Napoca Municipality	
Investments in digital infrastructure financed through NRRP... 20	

Introducere

The European Union has set extremely ambitious goals through its Digital Decade policy programme, with 2030 as the benchmark for digital transformation. The programme is based on 4 pillars, with ambitious measures in terms of increasing digital skills for citizens and the number of ICT specialists, the digitisation of public services, the digital transformation of businesses and secure and sustainable digital infrastructures. Furthermore, the programme also establishes an annual cooperation mechanism between the European Commission and the Member States to achieve common objectives and targets.

- Digital skills: At least 80% of EU citizens aged 16-74 should have basic digital skills, with over 20 million ICT specialists employed, and gender gaps in ICT professions should be significantly reduced.
- Enterprises: 75% of companies should adopt advanced technologies, such as cloud, artificial intelligence and big data. The number of European "unicorns" should double. Over 90% of SMEs should reach a basic level of digital intensity.
- Infrastructure: 100% universal gigabit connectivity, development of next-generation semiconductors to double the EU's share of global production, 10,000 secure and climate-neutral edge nodes and the first quantum-accelerated computer by 2030.
- Public services: 100% online access to main public services, e-health services and digital identity.

Romania has aligned itself with this framework, assuming a series of objectives to accelerate digital transformation over the next five years, by adopting the National Digital Action Plan in October 2024. However, the figures describing the current situation on the 4 pillars, as well as the digital objectives assumed by Romania, indicate numerous challenges that need to be addressed. The main challenges remain the limited level of basic digital skills, but also the slow process of adopting new technologies (artificial intelligence, edge and cloud services). The level of basic digital skills in Romania remains worrying and, according to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI 2025), only 27.7% of Romanians aged 16 to 74 have basic digital skills, a level that has stagnated in recent years and well below the European Union average of 54%, and the European target of 80% by 2030. Romania has assumed a modest objective of only 50% as a reference for 2030, while internal gaps are widening, especially among rural residents, vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities — precisely where improving access to digital services and skills would be urgent.

These disparities are accentuated by major social and demographic differences, and in the long term, the gaps may increase in the absence of targeted support actions for categories at risk of digital exclusion. According to DESI 2025, only 20.9% of rural residents have basic digital skills, compared to the European average of 47.5%, and among older people aged 65–74 the percentage drops to only 6.1%, compared to 28.2% at EU level. Educational level is a decisive factor: 63.9% of people with higher education have basic digital skills (compared to 79.8% in the EU), while only 12.6% of those with low education reach this threshold (compared to 33.6% in the EU). Young people aged 16–24 are more familiar with technology, but only 47.2% of them reach the level of basic skills, compared to the EU average of 70%. Regarding gender, differences are also present: 29.1% of men have basic digital skills, compared to 26.5% of women.

Romania has a real potential to accelerate the digitalization process. There are valuable initiatives in public administration, especially at local level, in the private sector and in the civic sector, and European resources offer an important opportunity to reduce digital exclusion. Capitalizing on these good practices, correlated with a common vision and an open dialogue between institutions, experts and civil society, can contribute to achieving the digital objectives assumed by Romania. At the Romanian Center for European Policies, we have already published [the first independent analysis of the National Plan for the Digital Decade](#).

However, we also aimed to document examples of good practices from Romania, from both the public and private sectors, which have as their main objective the development of digital skills among students and vulnerable groups — elderly people, rural residents or people with a low level of education. The aim of the approach is to highlight initiatives that contribute to reducing the digital divide and promoting digital inclusion. As the DESI 2025 country report highlights, training activities in the field of digital skills remain predominantly the responsibility of the private sector.

What we have observed, however, is a much smaller number of long-term, continuous actions and projects carried out by local public authorities, compared to initiatives coming from the private sector – especially from the business community and civil society. Local authority initiatives are most often conceived as project activities, with rather general objectives, without a clear assumption that one of the major challenges at local level is the low level of digital skills. In the absence of a real needs analysis and well-defined digital objectives, local projects often remain fragmented, with little continuity and unclearly formulated impact indicators. However, there are exceptions, with continuous programs, developed by social assistance services or often in partnership with civil society organizations and the business community.

In addition to investments in digital infrastructure and hardware, financed in recent years mainly through the NRRP, many public authorities have carried out, individually or in partnership with civil society organizations, training programs dedicated to students, teachers and elderly people in the field of digital skills. At the level of social assistance departments, projects are often carried out for seniors, and at the level of public libraries and educational institutions, initiatives are implemented for students and teachers. These programs remain, however, limited in terms of objectives, target group and scalability, although they are essential for digital inclusion, which is why we encourage their expansion and consolidation at local and national levels.

In the private sector and civil society, we note a series of long-term programs with very good results, which provide support for the development of both basic and advanced digital skills, especially among students. Initiatives such as Digitaliada, Hi Digital, Code Kids, the Digital Center for Women or the Științescu Fund are examples of good practice that demonstrate that things can evolve when there is continuity and vision.

CODE Kids is an educational initiative aimed at rural children aged 10 to 14, which aims to develop coding skills and provide them with access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) activities by creating coding clubs in public libraries in Romania. The initiative has grown from working with 35 public libraries in 2017 to 145 in 2025, forming 289 coding clubs and involving approximately 14,000 children from rural areas. Digitaliada has become a national program with 101 partner schools, over 7,000 teachers, 5,000 parents and over 25,000 students using its educational resources. Hi Digital has supported over 5,000 seniors from more than 60 localities, through partnerships with 11 organizations and 17 public libraries. The Științescu Fund , active in 19 counties through 15 community foundations, is present in over 200 localities and has funded over 430 STEM projects.

Below, we present ten examples of good practice, selected from both the private and public sectors, which illustrate sustainable and replicable models of digital skills development at the local level.

Metodology

The research included a preliminary documentation stage, based on the analysis of information available in the public space. We applied distinct methods depending on the type of actors involved in the implementation of the initiatives, differentiating between public authorities and private initiatives. For public sector initiatives, almost 100 requests for information were sent and 5 research interviews were organized. For private sector initiatives, 8 research interviews were organized.

For public authorities, written requests were sent under Law 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest, requesting data on projects carried out in the field of digitalization, with an emphasis on those dedicated to the development of digital skills among vulnerable groups. The data received were supplemented with those available in the public space or through research interviews. Requests for information were sent to all county residences and county councils, a limitation of the research being the fact that it could not follow such initiatives at the level of all administrative-territorial units. However, the preliminary research included the information available online at the level of all local public authorities.

For private sector initiatives, the team identified and selected programs considered relevant and representative as examples of good practices in the field of increasing digital skills among vulnerable categories. Of course, these are not the only ones, there are many other initiatives that manage to improve access to the digital world. After the documentation stage, the organizations and individuals responsible for implementing these programs were contacted, and through semi-structured interviews, data was collected on the objectives, activities and results obtained.

The documentation of digital initiatives aimed to provide a detailed picture of how each initiative functioned, the results obtained and the mechanisms that ensure long-term impact. For each initiative analyzed, the general objectives, the implementation period, the target groups targeted and the geographical area of action, as well as the funding sources that supported the activities were examined. The analysis also included the partnerships developed at the local level, with non-governmental organizations, libraries, schools or other community institutions, and how these collaborations contributed to achieving the proposed objectives. The relationship with local public authorities was another element of analysis, being followed the extent to which institutional support facilitated the implementation of the programs or, on the contrary, limited their expansion. In addition, the analysis targeted the sustainability of the programs, the continuation of the activities and possible expansion plans.

Digital initiatives - private sector

The Digitaliada, CODE Kids, Hi Digital and the Științescu Fund initiatives aim to increase digital skills and reduce digital gaps. Together, these initiatives have reached over 120,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries, especially from socially vulnerable backgrounds or with limited access to digital education, and have created platforms and hubs that allow for continuity and multiplication of impact over time.

1. Digitaliada

Digitaliada is a free national digital education program, launched in 2016 by the Orange Foundation. It started as a pilot project in 10 rural schools and has gradually grown to become one of the most well-known digital education initiatives in Romania. The program currently has 101 partner schools.

The program supports middle school students, teachers, and parents to use interactive digital resources, thereby increasing digital skills and academic performance and reducing the gaps between rural and urban areas.

The program is based on three major directions of intervention:

- **Teacher training:** training sessions for the use of the platform and digital methodologies, with the possibility for some teachers to later become trainers for other colleagues. The Digitaliada network has worked with over 7,000 teachers and 5,000 parents from 101 partner schools, and the platform's resources are used by more than 25,000 students.
- **IT equipment in schools :** over 2,100 tablets and over 300 pieces of equipment (laptops, video projectors, interactive whiteboards) distributed to partner schools.
- **The online platform www.digitaliada.ro:** a digital library with over 4,000 open educational resources, including interactive lessons, exercises and tests for the National Assessment.

The financing of Digitaliada comes from the Orange Foundation funds, complemented by European projects and training services offered in addition to the free ones within the program.

Digitaliada is based on collaboration with schools and local communities. The direct beneficiaries are middle school students and teachers from the 101 partner schools, especially in rural and small urban areas, but the program is also addressed to parents who are actively involved in the digital educational process.



Image source: Fundația Orange

A novelty of the platform is the #Digitaliada competition that rewards students over 14 years old, teachers and digital education enthusiasts who create original and open source teaching materials for grades I-VIII. Participants can submit applications and platforms, video content, teaching projects or other digital educational resources. The best works are awarded with electronic and IT equipment. All resources from previous editions are available on www.platformadigitaliada.ro.

The platform is used monthly by approximately 15,000 people, and in 2025 the number of users accessing the resources several times a month reached 70,000–80,000 people. In addition to the quantitative data, teachers involved in the program reported visible improvements in students' digital skills and a greater openness to technology-assisted learning.

Relationship with public authorities is usually established through schools and school inspectorates, with the involvement of local authorities, especially in the components that involve IT equipment. In some cases, applications to the program are submitted by the city halls themselves, in partnership with schools and inspectorates, which ensures more efficient coordination at the local level. **The relationship with NGOs and local partners is based on collaboration with foundations, associations and companies that contribute to the development of content, training and technical services.**

These partnerships bring innovation and diversity to the program, an example being the collaboration with Mediawise Society for the development of resources dedicated to media education. Moreover, there is also their active involvement in improving public policies, especially in the consultations on amendments to the Education Law or civil society working groups on digitalization issues.

The main objective of the program is to expand access to digital education for students, teachers and parents, and to increase the capacity of local partners by developing an increasingly autonomous platform. Additionally, the program aims to contribute to the introduction of media literacy as a subject in schools and to promote a balanced consumption of technology among students.

2. The Code Kids Programme

The CODE Kids program began in 2017, launched by the Progress Foundation, in partnership with the Etic Association, and funded by the Romanian-American Foundation (RAF). CODE Kids is an educational initiative aimed at rural children aged 10 to 14, which aims to develop programming skills and provide them with access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) activities by creating programming clubs in public libraries in Romania. These clubs are designed to facilitate free learning of programming languages, but also to get involved in community life.

The Progress Foundation, through the CODE Kids team, provides a curriculum structured on two levels:

- **Beginners Level (Year 1)**, where children learn basic concepts in programming and coding.
- **Advanced Level (Year 2)**, in which children continue with more complex activities, such as robotics, Arduino, mobile application development, and IT projects, as well as the development of soft skills.

CODE Kids organizes and supports annual competitions that give children the opportunity to present their projects developed within the clubs. These competitions are organized in two stages: a regional and a national one, with the aim of encouraging innovation and developing children's technical skills. At the regional science fairs, students from CODE Kids clubs show their projects in areas such as robotics, mobile applications and more. These are evaluated and the best teams are selected to advance to the national stage. The CODE Kids National Science Fair takes the form of an interactive exhibition, where qualified teams from different regions of the country present their projects. For example, in 2023, the event was held at the Politehnica University of Bucharest, and the teams had the opportunity to show how their projects were based on community needs.

In terms of collaboration with public authorities, CODE Kids works annually with approximately 250 town halls across the country, especially in rural areas. In Romania, public libraries operate under the subordination of local public authorities, and not of the Ministry of Culture, which determines a complex administrative mechanism in managing projects. Within the CODE Kids program, the partnership is established directly with each town hall, and the libraries act as local implementers of the project, based on agreements concluded at the administration level.

This structure requires careful coordination and sometimes encounters obstacles related to resources and institutional priorities. Library budgets are determined by local funding and are usually limited, which means that digitization activities are not always treated as a priority at the local level. Due to this financial and administrative framework, the expansion of the CODE Kids club network depends largely on the availability and support of local authorities. Although the program does not require co-financing from them, precisely in order to maintain free access for all children, the lack of more consistent support and flexible collaboration with local administrations limits the potential for development and replication of the initiative in other communities.

In terms of collaboration with civic groups, NGOs or other local actors, the CODE Kids program aims to expand its network to as many communities as possible, including in localities where libraries or public authorities do not have the necessary resources or do not show interest in getting involved. In such situations, the program team identifies alternative solutions, such as organizing clubs within educational institutions or in partnership with local civic organizations that can provide space and logistical support. Also, in some cases, libraries opt to establish their own associations, administratively separate from city halls, to ensure greater autonomy in managing educational activities and developing digital training initiatives. This flexibility allows the program to adapt to local needs and contributes to maintaining an active presence of CODE Kids even in communities where institutional collaboration is more difficult.

The CODE Kids initiative is also active in advocacy and engagement in public policy debates on digitization issues, with the objective of raising the profile of libraries at the local level, especially in the context of digitization and STEM education for children. Furthermore, it has participated in consultations and debates on digitization issues, including the consultations organized for the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).



Image Source: Progress Foundation

CODE Kids results show significant progress in rural areas, starting from 35 public libraries in 2017 and reaching 145 libraries and 289 coding clubs in 2025. To date, approximately 14,000 children have learned with CODE Kids.

The program reports significant results, demonstrating a rapid capacity to produce positive changes at the community level. One of the main effects observed was the increase in the confidence of librarians in working with young people, which led to the diversification of the educational services offered to them. Improved communication between libraries and local communities led to a more active involvement of young people in educational activities and stimulated the development of innovative community initiatives.

The Progress Foundation conducted an SROI (Social Return on Investment) analysis, a method that evaluates the social impact of a project by converting social, economic and environmental benefits into financial values, in order to reflect the efficiency of the investment. According to this analysis, the SROI value of the CODE Kids project in 2024 is 1:9.04 , which indicates that each lei invested generated a social value equivalent to 9.04 lei.

In terms of sustainability and continuity of the program, CODE Kids aims to continue beyond 2026, the year in which the third RAF funding cycle will end.

3. Hi Digital - Vodafone

Hi Digital is a program launched by the Vodafone Romania Foundation, dedicated to seniors over 65, with the aim of improving their digital skills, reducing social isolation and encouraging digital inclusion. The program debuted in November 2023, through a one-year pilot project, carried out in 11 localities in Romania. In partnership with local NGOs and the Royal Margaret of Romania Foundation, Hi Digital was adapted to the realities of Romania, with a program methodology, a free and public Hi Digital guide, and a structured training of trainers program, so that they become multipliers of digital knowledge in their communities. **In 2024, the program was expanded, reaching 11 new organizations and 17 public libraries.**

The program has two key aspects:

- **Libraries transformed into digital and social hubs - Hi Digital Workshops**

The project's core focus is to transform community libraries into digital and social hubs. The Hi Digital program trains librarians to become digital ambassadors for seniors. Through workshops, they support participants to navigate the technological world with confidence, giving them the tools they need to be more independent and active.

The Hi Digital workshops are based on the Hi Digital Guide, which includes 14 practical and relevant topics in everyday life (from smartphone use, online communication and digital safety, to internet banking, online shopping or social media). Based on these topics, 10 workshops are organized, with small groups of seniors (maximum 15 participants), to maintain personalized and interactive learning. The meetings take place, in most libraries, twice a week and last approximately two hours, including a coffee break for socializing. At the end of the workshop, seniors receive diplomas, and the session is concluded with a celebration activity, again emphasizing socialization, and the creation of a real community space.

To support this process, the Vodafone Foundation has equipped the selected libraries with basic IT equipment and consumables necessary for the workshops. At the end of the implementation period, each library will receive the technological kit used during the program. At the same time, the libraries benefit from a mini-grant, with values between 5,000 and 6,000 euros, aimed at making them more active for the entire community. These funds can be used to organize social moments for the community (for example, coffee breaks), or for purchases necessary for the library, so that the space becomes more connected to community life.

- **Digital assistance in Vodafone stores**

The second direction of the Hi Digital program includes a digital assistance component offered to seniors directly in two Vodafone stores in Bucharest: seniors benefit from priority assistance from Vodafone technical experts, and personalized support.

The relationship with public authorities is based on partnerships with city halls. In Bucharest and Ilfov, the General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Municipality of Bucharest (DGASMB) and the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) provide spaces and teams dedicated to the program, without contributing financially, but ensuring a permanent human resource, which can be further trained and involved to expand the activities.



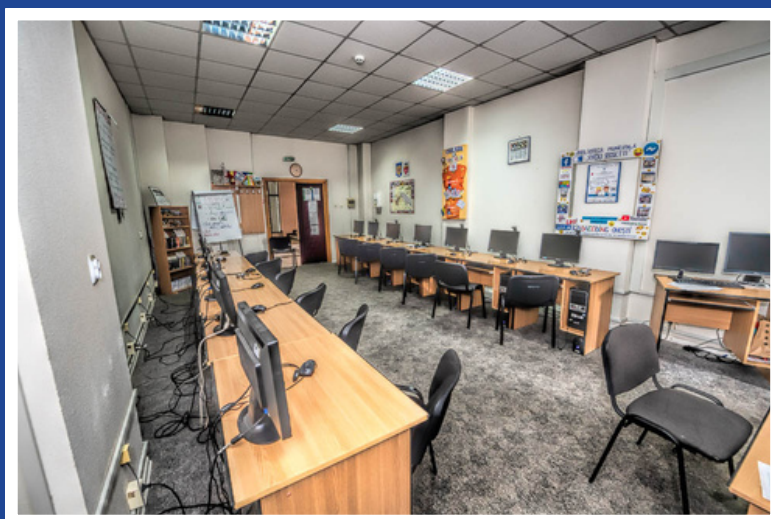
So far, the Hi Digital program has helped over 5,000 seniors over 65 years old from more than 60 localities to develop their digital skills. To make this possible, 150 trainers – librarians, social workers and NGO representatives – were trained and hold digital education workshops according to the Vodafone Foundation methodology.

A real support network was created around them: 17 public libraries, 19 local NGOs and 15 day centers became active learning hubs for seniors, managing to carry forward the message and impact of the program in their communities. In 2024 alone, over 1,000 seniors participated in the courses and improved their digital skills, guided by 86 instructors. Libraries, senior centers and organizations involved have thus strengthened their capacity to work with their communities in the long term, using the Hi Digital Guide as their main tool.

HI DIGITAL program in the Onești municipal library

As part of the Hi Digital program, seniors over 65 years old participate twice a week in digitization workshops organized at the Municipal Library of Onești, where they learn how to use their mobile phone, email address, services such as ghiseul.ro, how to avoid online fraud, etc. The workshops are interactive and librarians trained by Hi Digital adapt the lessons according to the seniors' wishes.

The library collaborates with all educational institutions in the county, developing partnerships with the Pensioners' Association and the Blind Association of Bacău County, to ensure access to educational activities and support for various categories of beneficiaries. Collaboration with social assistance services contributes to the integration of library programs in vulnerable communities and to the expansion of their impact.



Sursa imaginii: Biblioteca Onești

The library maintains an active collaboration with civic groups and non-governmental organizations in the region, participating in projects and initiatives with an educational and digital component. Constant involvement in national digitization programs has allowed the institution to strengthen its partnership network and diversify its activities addressed to the public.

From a financial point of view, the Hi Digital program does not generate any costs for the library, all expenses being covered by the Vodafone Foundation. The library benefits from an annual grant of 5,000 euros, used exclusively for the organization of digital training courses and socializing activities for seniors. In 2025, over 100 people directly or indirectly benefited from the activities carried out within the program.

The library is a model of continuity and innovation in this field. The recent renovation, completed in 2023, transformed the institution into a regional cultural and digital hub, becoming a space for education and digital inclusion. According to library representatives, the number of visitors has tripled since 2023, including both young people and seniors, which reflects not only the success of the modernization process, but also the growing interest of the community in using digital resources when they are accessible and accompanied by appropriate guidance. The library is currently running several projects focused on developing digital skills, such as the Wikipedia Workshop and Navigator 50+, addressed to different categories of public. For seniors who have already completed the stages of digital initiation, the institution offers opportunities for in-depth and advanced exploration of technological tools, supporting them to acquire a safer and more active relationship with the digital environment. Also, the audiobook service provided by the library facilitates access to culture and information for people with disabilities or those from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds.



Image source: Fundația Vodafone

4. The Științescu Fund

The Științescu Fund, launched in 2015 with the strategic support of the RAF, marks ten years of continuous intervention in support of STEM education in Romania. With a national coverage in 19 counties, the program has gradually expanded, becoming in 2025 one of the largest initiatives of this type in the country. Through its 15 partner community foundations, the Științescu Fund is present in over 200 localities, both in rural and urban areas, supporting over 430 projects that promote science, innovation and digitalization.

At the national level, the Științescu Fund defines the strategic directions, coordinates the entire intervention and develops spin-off projects, such as the Științescu Fairs or the Științescu Caravan, which bring science closer to communities. At the same time, community foundations are the ones who bring the program to life at the local level: they map the needs on the ground, identify opportunities, and implement projects adapted to each community.

The fund operates on a matching mechanism: the amounts collected from communities (through local, corporate or individual contributions) are doubled by RAF, and the resources thus obtained are returned to the community in the form of grants.



Image source: Fondul Științescu

An example of the impact of the Științescu Fund in the digitalization sector is the project “Innovation through Imagination”, implemented by the Vâlcea Community Foundation. The project created a science and technology hub for children between 5 and 19 years old from rural localities, providing them with access to modern technologies and interactive learning opportunities. In this hub, children have access to programming, robotics and STEM competitions workshops, which allow them to develop their digital skills. In addition, the Mobile Caravan expands the impact, visiting more localities and offering children from different areas the chance to participate in STEM activities, thus multiplying the educational effect of the project.

Between 2022 and 2025, the Științescu Fund financed 411 STEM education projects, with a total investment of 5 million lei. Over 70,000 students from 20 counties participated in practical activities and workshops that developed their scientific and digital skills. The sustainability of the program is possible through the constant support provided by RAF and local communities. Each edition brings new projects, adapted to current needs, but at the same time maintains the elements of continuity that ensure the coherence and stability of the initiative.

Digital initiatives - public sector

Initiatives dedicated to developing basic digital skills at the level of public authorities remain fragmented and insufficiently ambitious. These programmes are generally marked by a temporary nature and a lack of continuity, often being dependent on funding through specific projects and considered a secondary objective. This structural instability clearly prevents them from ensuring the long-term sustainability of activities and from having a scalability and impact similar to programmes in the private sector.

In recent years, against the backdrop of the European Union's ambitious policies within the Digital Decade, as well as the integration of digital objectives in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027, several relevant public initiatives have been launched. However, we note that most investments are directed towards hardware infrastructure (equipping schools, laboratories, libraries), while the actual training component, intended for the general public (students, teachers), remains limited. For other categories considered vulnerable in terms of digital skills (elderly people, people from socio-vulnerable backgrounds, rural areas), as identified in the National Digital Action Plan, the initiatives are far too few. Moreover, a fundamental problem is the limited policy of evaluating the impact of these initiatives: projects are marked as successful if funding is accessed and the number of learners is reached, without there being, essentially, a qualitative assessment of the real impact on the level of digital skills acquired.

Even though the National Digital Action Plan for Romania 2030 openly acknowledges the low level of basic digital skills, the national policy response to this deficit remains marginal, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas, where socio-economic vulnerabilities exacerbate the situation. A significant part of public resources remains, critically, focused on the digitalization of the administration and the training of civil servants, while real support for vulnerable groups continues to be provided predominantly by the efforts of the private sector and civil society.

Changing this paradigm is mandatory to increase the overall level of digital literacy in Romania. A truly integrated approach is needed, based on strategic coordination between public authorities, civil society organizations, the education system and the business environment. This requires not only dedicated funding, but also the development of long-term training programs, supported by stable mentoring and support mechanisms. It also requires the implementation of a solid qualitative monitoring and evaluation component, which measures the real impact of these interventions, going beyond simply reporting the number of sessions or participants.

1. Deva Municipality

Vă conectăm! is a program that teaches seniors to use smart devices to communicate with loved ones and access online services.

The beneficiaries of the project are elderly people from the Deva “Clubul Seniorilor” Center, a social service of the Deva Social Assistance Service.



Image Source: Deva City Hall

Participants learn to use tablets specially designed for their age and needs, with easy-to-use interfaces, and a training guide provides them with basic information about using smartphones and tablets. The project was developed by the Lions Organization in Bremen, Germany, and is implemented in several cities across the country. The initiative in Deva is in partnership with the Lions Club Deva Sarmizegetusa.

2. Iași Municipality

The **DIGI-INCLUSION (URBACT III)** aims to promote the digital inclusion of citizens.

The project focuses on supporting older people and people with disabilities to access and use digital services. The program offers workshops and training sessions for seniors, people with disabilities and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them develop their digital skills and participate more actively in the community. On the other hand, the initiative helps develop the skills of civil servants to better support citizens in the digitalisation process.

DIGI-INCLUSION is part of a European program (URBACT) that supports digital inclusion, helping older people and those with disabilities to use technology and be more active in the community.

3. Baia Mare Municipality

„Bunicii noștri” (“our grandparents”) is a digital skills training program dedicated to seniors, which aims to increase basic digital skills and reduce the digital divide for this vulnerable category. The

courses help seniors use technology in their daily lives, from communicating with family to accessing online services.

The program continues to be run by the Baia Mare Social Assistance Service, ensuring continuity and long-term support for participants.



Image source: Baia Mare City Hall

4. Bucharest: Collaboration between Hi Digital (Vodafone Foundation) and the General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Bucharest Municipality

The General Directorate of Social Assistance of Bucharest (DGASMB) collaborates with the Vodafone Romania Foundation within the Hi Digital program, coordinating digital education activities dedicated to seniors in the Capital. As a result of the partnership, 30 employees of DGASMB were trained as digital multipliers and hold weekly digital initiation workshops in day centers for the elderly.

DGASMB facilitates the implementation of the program through its community spaces and networks, ensuring direct access to target groups and continuity of activities. The courses are complemented by mentoring and counseling sessions for trainers, designed to support the learning process and adaptation to the needs of seniors.

The Vodafone Foundation provides the necessary educational resources, specialized consultancy and technological equipment, and DGASMB integrates the program into its current activity, transforming digital education for seniors into a permanent public service. This approach ensures the sustainability of the initiative and its long-term continuation in the senior communities of Bucharest.

5. Oradea Municipality

The Oradea Social Assistance Service is running the project "Initiation into the use of the latest generation phone by the elderly", which aims to increase autonomy and digital skills among seniors. The courses are designed in the form of interactive sessions, in which participants learn to use the basic functions of a smartphone (calls, messages, photos, applications or online payments), to maintain contact with family and to reduce the risk of social isolation.

The activities are conducted in both Romanian and Hungarian, in groups of 13 people. So far, over 100 seniors have participated in the courses, and two groups are currently active and have a waiting list of 59 people. The participants reported that, as a result of their participation, they were able to buy their first smartphone, access online services and maintain contact with family and friends.



Sursa imaginii: Direcția de Asistență Socială Oradea

The initiative has expanded and is now offering a monthly program of activities dedicated to the elderly: visits to tourist attractions, creative workshops and thematic discussions. The project has been running since April 2025, for an indefinite period, exclusively from the own resources of the Oradea Social Assistance Directorate.

6. Buzău County Council

The Buzău County Council renovated and modernized three libraries, transforming them into hubs for the development of digital skills, and equipped another 26 libraries in the county with modern IT equipment, through a project financed by the NRRP. The hubs provide the necessary infrastructure for digital literacy and become learning spaces for the community, supporting in particular people with limited access to training and marginalized groups in rural areas.

To date, the project has contributed to the training of approximately 2,500 people from disadvantaged communities, trained by librarian trainers in each locality. The project is fully financed by non-reimbursable European funds and does not involve partnerships with other local authorities, NGOs or civic groups. The initiative does not have an advocacy component, being oriented exclusively towards the development of digital skills and the provision of the necessary infrastructure for digital education of citizens from disadvantaged areas.

7. Cluj-Napoca Municipality

The project "Digital Seniors - developing the digital skills of seniors", carried out in Cluj-Napoca, is coordinated by the Transilvania IT Cluster, in partnership with AROBS Transilvania Software and Simplon Romania, and is financed under Law 350/2005 on the regime of non-reimbursable financing from public funds allocated for non-profit activities of general interest. Implemented over several years and still ongoing in 2025, the project aims to support seniors in adapting to the digital age, through training and knowledge transfer activities carried out with the help of experts and young volunteers, high school students.

Investments in digital infrastructure financed through NRRP

Romanian authorities have expanded investments in digital skills in recent years – not only through soft measures, training for students and teachers or digital learning resources, but also through investments in the infrastructure of schools and universities: laboratories, equipment, libraries transformed into digital hubs, digital centers. A large part of these initiatives were financed through the NRRP, Component 15 – Education. Numerous local authorities and educational institutions have accessed and implemented projects in the digital field with funding from the NRRP.

Some of the measures, as they are present in the National Digital Action Plan for Romania, were:

Measure 3 – Funding schemes for libraries as digital skills development hubs

Status of the measure: Unfortunately, there is no centralized data on implementation yet, although numerous projects are completed or ongoing. Two calls for projects have been published, but detailed information on the status of implementation is not available.

Measure 13 – Digitalizing universities and preparing them for the digital professions of the future

Status of the measure: According to data communicated by the Ministry of Education and Research, 61 contracts with public and private universities have been signed, totaling 213.47 million EURO in funds. In June 2025, 60 projects were in implementation, with an average technical progress of 73%. The official target – supporting 60 universities by setting up digital centres – is considered achievable by the deadline of 31 March 2026. One project has been proposed for termination due to lack of technical and financial progress.

Data for September 2025 indicate 10 functional digital centers, and 50 are in an advanced phase of implementation. 3,508 teachers and 6,518 students have benefited from training.

Measure 14 – Providing equipment and digital technological resources for educational institutions

Status of the measure: According to data communicated by the Ministry of Education and Research, for the digitalization of laboratories and classrooms, 2,506 financing contracts were signed, totaling RON 2.14 billion, through the call "Equipping pre-university education units with furniture, teaching materials and digital equipment", with a completion date of December 31, 2025. In parallel, 1,113 contracts worth RON 418.8 million were signed for the equipping of smart laboratories in high schools and children's clubs, with a deadline of September 30, 2025.

The data for June 2025 show that 2,503 and 1,094 projects were under implementation. Of these projects, 4,027 schools are equipped in a proportion of over 30%, 384 under 30%, and 3 schools are still in the contracting phase. In the case of smart labs, 570 are fully equipped, 759 partially equipped, and 24 have not yet received equipment. The call has been extended until June 2026.

The latest public data, from September 2025, shows that 2,606 schools had new technological laboratories, 3,446 received modern educational equipment, and 672 smartlabs were completed.

Measure 15 – On-the-job training program for teaching staff

Status of the measure: This measure aims at the continuous training of pre-university teachers for the development of digital skills and digital pedagogy. According to data communicated by the Ministry of Education and Research, 18 projects are being implemented, with an initial target of 97,150 teachers, later extended to 100,450. By August 2025, 58,596 teachers had completed the training programs (approximately 58% progress), of which 44.27% were certified and 14.31% had provisional certificates. The implementation was extended until June 2026.

Measure 16 – Online school: Development of the evaluation platform and creation of digital content

Status of the measure: The call "Development of the evaluation platform and creation of digital content" had an allocation of 78.59 million EURO. Consulting services were purchased for the preparation of tenders regarding the digital educational platform and resources (RED). However, through a memorandum sent on 20 March 2025, the Ministry of Education and Research proposed the elimination of the investment. The call was unilaterally terminated following negotiations with the European Commission and transferred to the POCIDIF funding line, currently in the process of being relaunched.

Source of information: Requests under Law 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest and the Memorandum published by the Ministry of Education and Research on the status of investments regarding Component 15 - Education.

Authors

Maria Suciu

Maria Suciu is a researcher at the Romanian Center for European Policies, where she works on projects dedicated to social inclusion. She holds a Master's degree in European Public Policy from the London School of Economics (LSE), with a specialization in the Balkans, after a BA in European Studies from King's College London and Sciences Po.

E-mail: maria.suciu@crpe.ro



Alexandru Damian

Alexandru Damian is a Program Director at the Romanian Center for European Policies and has extensive experience in the field of good governance, public administration and civic activism. Alexandru holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Bucharest and a MA in Political Science from the Free University of Brussels. E-mail: alexandru.damian@crpe.ro

E-mail: alexandru.damian@crpe.ro



This project is funded by the European Citizens Action Service (ECAS) under the EURECA 2025 project, co-financed by the European Union. The opinions and views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Union or ECAS. Neither the European Union nor ECAS can be held responsible for them .