

Governance, Social Policy and Communication

Digital participation in old age: Municipal governance concept in Frankfurt, Germany R. Werny.
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Purpose The transformation processes taking place as part of digitalisation are permeating all areas of society. The politically driven agenda in Germany, a country in which digitalisation of society is less advanced, frames digitalisation as a goal and solution for societal challenges such as demographic change. Nevertheless, age does not play a major role in policy documents dealing with digitalisation. When older people are mentioned, they are present as a homogenous group, who lack digital skills. Different needs and prevailing social inequalities are not addressed and minimal investments provided. At the same time, social participation and independence are highlighted as benefits of digitalisation for older people [1]. The result is a lack of a roadmap for how older people should achieve digital literacy [2]. Programs to promote this area are implemented at the local level. This presentation uses the city of Frankfurt as an example to examine how digital support services can be managed with a focus on marginalized older people. **Method** Various methodological tools were used to incorporate the perspectives of municipal employees, social workers, and service providers. The starting point was an analysis of the current state of “digital services for older adults” in Frankfurt. On this basis, three group discussions were held with representatives of the services, welfare organizations, and municipal employees. The participants in the discussions work at various levels on the issue of digital participation among older people: teaching and implementation on site, conception and organization at welfare organizations, and the municipality. Grounded theory was used for data analysis and interpretation. In order to incorporate the perspective of older citizens, recommendations for action on the topic of digital participation in old age were taken into account, which were developed in collaboration with older citizens of Frankfurt [3]. **Results and Discussion** Based on the analysis of various perspectives in the documents, a governance concept was developed for the city of Frankfurt. To this end, commonalities, contrasts, and specific areas of action were identified and used for the concrete design. The focus was on the question of how older people, who are particularly vulnerable, and those who do not use digital devices and applications, can be reached. The central components were (1) the establishment and promotion of digital assistance and support services as central pillars of elderly care in Frankfurt on a broad level, (2) the use of a training program for city employees and full-time and volunteer staff who work with older people, (3) greater use of existing services and relationships of trust, and (4) strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation. The focus was on developing a dynamic structure that can keep pace with rapid digital developments, changing care needs, and long-term investments. The challenge lies in creating sustainable structures for the long term, as digital participation in old age is not a problem that will simply disappear, but one that will remain due to the rapid pace of digitalisation. The article discusses the extent to which local results in the form of governance can be transferred to other regional and national contexts and the challenges that arise in doing so. In addition, practical implications for local authorities and welfare organizations were highlighted and discussed.

References

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