Digital competence of companies and communities

Recommendations for providing digital support

2021

DIGITAL AND POPULATION DATA SERVICES AGENCY

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Briefly

Digital support is being developed and digital skills promoted in cooperation between several operators. Digital support is not the sole responsibility of just one party, which is why actors from different sectors are needed in its development. The challenges and opportunities of companies and communities in using digital tools must be identified in order to find the best ways to support digital competence. Both the target group itself and the group offering support are large and extend from small local actors to national ones.

Recommendations concerning the organisation of digital support for companies and communities highlight relevant needs and solutions for developing digital support and competence. The recommendations provide information and support to municipal and state authorities, organisations, companies and other business organisations that design and fund digital services and support and operate in their sphere.

Some key observations that can be brought up here are the link between the need for digital support and the quality of services, the need for uniform digital support, consideration of different support needs, and the development of practical ways of implementing digital support.

During the project, the need to develop a situational picture of digital competence has been identified. However, the needs for digital support and digital competence cannot be measured separately from other development of digitalisation.

Digital support refers to support for the use of digital services and devices. Forms of support include:

REMOTE SUPPORT Chat, telephone or video support, unmanned service points

FACE-TO-FACE SUPPORT Service points, peer support and support at home

TRAINING E-learning, courses in adult education centres and study centres

HELP MATERIALS Recommendations, tips, videos, reports

1 Introduction

Finns are digitally competent people. Digital tools are utilised in services in many ways, and people know how to used technology to make their work easier. Being able to use services regardless of time or place makes the everyday lives of companies and communities easier.

The utilisation of digital tools requires users to have enough expertise in using them to actually support them and not make their life more difficult. When talking about digital competence in companies and communities, it is good to remember it involves a wide range of operators whose needs and activities differ from one another.

Project background and objectives

The Government Programme of the Prime Minister Sanna Marin has set the objective for Finland to become known as a pioneer in developing and introducing opportunities for digitalisation and technological development across administrative and industry boundaries. The aim is to increase the technology and digitalisation capabilities of the public sector and to develop cooperation between the public and private sectors.

The Programme for Promoting Digitalisation (Digitalisation Programme), created by the Ministry of Finance, sets the objective of providing public services as digital services to citizens and companies at least in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Provision of Digital Services. The objectives also include significantly decreasing the need for non-electronic and appointment-based services so that many business services would only be available digitally. In order to provide electronic services easily, the users need to also have digital competence. This is why one of the goals of the Digitalisation Programme is that digital support would be available throughout the country, and that it is also developed to serve those engaged in business activities.

In this context, those engaged in business activities refer to both companies and communities. In this context, they include companies and communities in different sectors as well as associations, cooperatives, housing companies, agriculture and forestry entrepreneurs and light entrepreneurs.

Objectives and definition of digital support

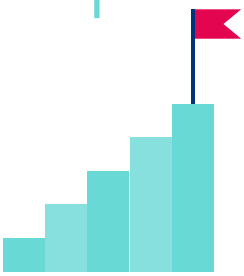
Digital support promotes equality. The aim of digital support is to strengthen inclusion by providing help in the use of services and devices, and to lower the threshold to adopt new electronic services by supporting the development of digital skills. This is how digital support promotes transferring official services to digital service channels.

Digital support can be defined from several perspectives and, more broadly, it can also include the development of digital competence, media literacy and digital security skills.

According to a general definition drawn up in cooperation with the parties providing digital support, digital support refers to support for the use of electronic services and devices. Its purpose is to help the customer to use devices independently and safely and to use electronic services.

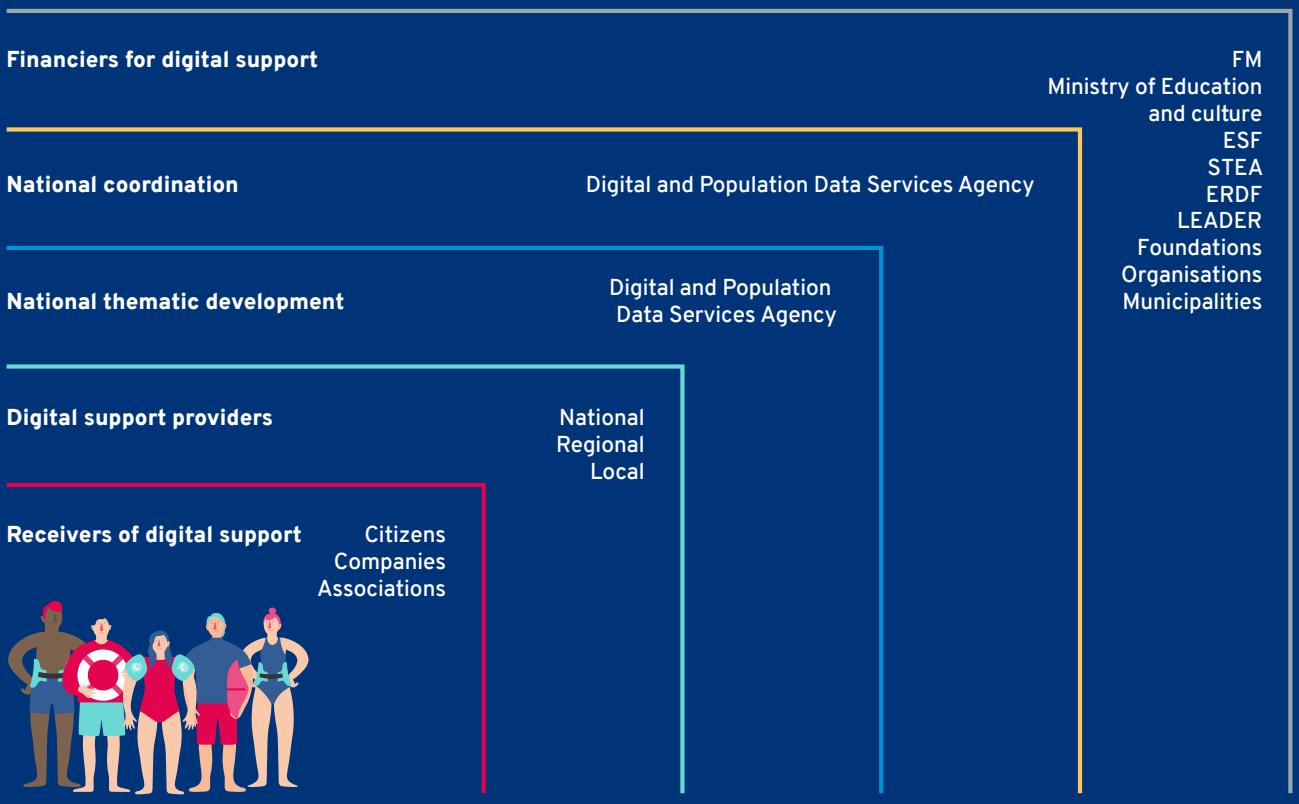
The content of digital support ranges from help in using e-services to recommending, installing and commissioning devices.

It should be noted that the definition needs to be updated as the competence requirements for digital services and skills change.



The main objectives of DVV's digital support include promoting the quality and accessibility of digital support; supporting national, regional and local operators in providing digital support through sharing information; increasing the competence needed for digital support; and producing an up-to-date situational picture on the need for digital support and digital competence.

Digital support actors



Digital support providers and financiers

Digital support providers
There are many types of digital support offered. Support is offered and needed at all levels of society, both nationally, regionally and locally.

COMPANIES	Companies, such as banks, insurance companies and telephone operators, usually provide advice on the use of their own services. Some companies in Finland also sell digital support as a service.
AUTHORITIES	Under the Administrative Procedure Act, public authorities have an obligation to provide guidance for the use of their services. In addition, broader, general advisory services, such as Public Service Info, are also available.
ORGANISATIONS	Digital support provided by organisations and associations is usually based on volunteering and peer guidance. The target group may be undefined, or their activities may target a special group (e.g. Kuuloliitto - the Hearing Association).
FRIENDS & FAMILY	Parents, children and friends are the largest provider of digital support. They are also the first people you ask when you need digital support.

Financiers for digital support
Digital support is funded in diverse ways both nationally and regionally.

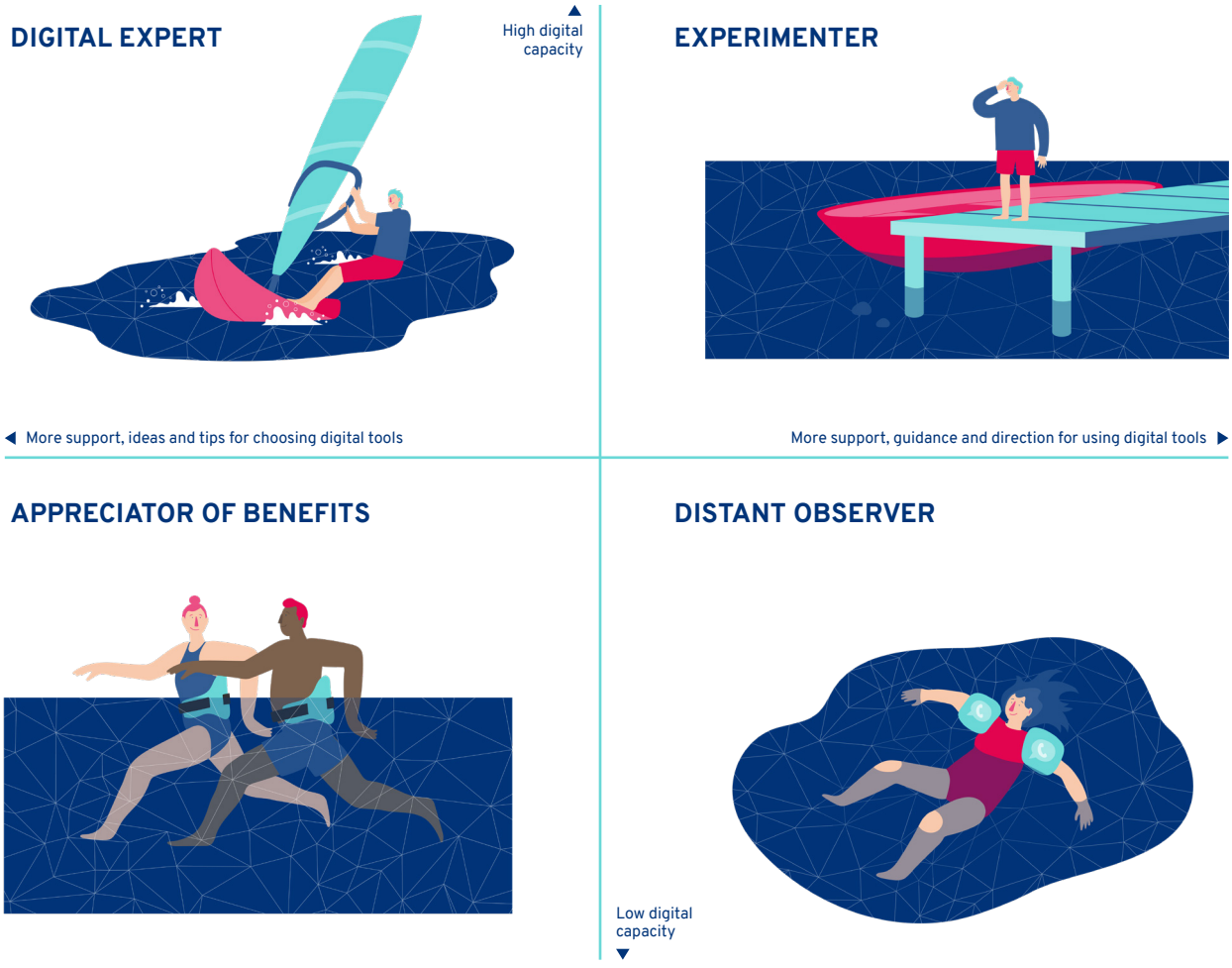
THE EU	The EU funds digital support through the Structural Funds (ERDF & ESF) as various kinds of project support. The LEADER activities, which are mainly funded by the EU, the state and municipalities, finance digital support activities in different parts of Finland.
STATE	Public administration funding for digital support comes from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. One of the largest providers of funding for digital support is STEA (Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations), which awards grants to non-profit associations from Veikkaus' profits.
MUNICIPALITIES	Municipalities finance digital support in their own area by organising their own support and by awarding grants to external operators. For example, many municipalities offer grants to local associations. In addition, municipalities offer facilities for other providers of digital support.
ORGANISATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS	National umbrella organisations support the activities of their regional member associations. Different foundations also fund digital support both regionally and nationally.

Who needs digital support?

Finns are active users of digital platforms but at the same time, digital support is still needed across the society. In order for the support to meet its goal, it is necessary to understand what the need for support is and the form in which it most effectively reaches the person who needs it.

In autumn 2020, we conducted a qualitative study on the digital competence of companies and communities and their needs for digital support. This was followed by a follow-up study in cooperation with the Finnish Enterprise Agency in spring 2021. The purpose of this quantitative pre-study was not to describe how the different profiles were represented in the target group, but to specify the definition of profile segments. The follow-up study was carried out as an online survey so people with a higher level of digital competence are overrepresented in it. The number of respondents (n=114) is relatively small for quantitative research but sufficient to produce statistically significant results required for segmentation.

Digital profiles are useful for organisations, whether their current goals are strategic or softer, related to operational methods. When the organisation is familiar with the digital profiles of its customers, it is easier to allocate support resources to selected target groups. It is also makes it easier to find the right partners and peer support. Digital profiles also increase the organisation's knowledge of their own operations and expand their perspectives. A normal pitfall in planning: designing services for people like yourself is easier to avoid by identifying your own profile and understanding the sizes and special needs of target groups.



Digital expert

A digital expert feels as comfortable in the digital world as a fish in water. They know many kinds of digital tools, applications and platforms with their logics. They also have excellent skills to start learning how to use new tools.

The skills of a digital expert require interest in the topic. The digital world is not unpleasant and foreign to them; instead, experts seize the opportunities that they are offered and tackle challenges boldly. They research information by themselves, often without external advice.

A digital expert also adopts comparative data easily. When using different tools, they clearly understand their benefits, strengths and weaknesses. They like talking about digital topics with other digital experts.

A digital expert has the courage to experiment and apply their knowledge creatively, developing their own shortcuts and ways of doing things.

Experimenter

A curious, relaxed explorer in the digital world. An experimental digital user has an open and interested attitude towards different digital tools and applications. The digital world is full of opportunities for them, even though sometimes they don't quite understand the service processes. They may not always think it's useful to learn absolutely everything. They don't hesitate to try different things, and when needed, they know how to ask for help or digital support - sometimes from the people they know, sometimes from a chat forum, sometimes from instruction manuals.

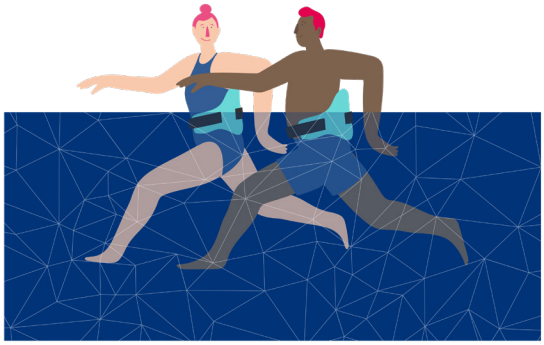
An experimental digital user is already fairly experienced. Their competence is on a good level and they are able to utilise a wide range of platforms and channels for both digital services and digital support. They pick the ones that best suit them and happily carry on.

Appreciator of benefits

Even in the digital world, an appreciator of benefits has the skills to focus on what is essential! Digital tools and new solutions are not important in themselves to them. Instead, they use them to find solutions if they are useful and serve their purpose.

They appreciate solution-oriented services and concise guidance. They don't care much for all the extra bells and whistles.

You don't always have the time to learn new things. It's much easier to focus on what is essential. They utilise relevant news, real-time training and deadlines to ensure that they get everything done.



An appreciator of benefits also listens to the stories of friends and colleagues and utilises peer support. They are often the best way to get concise, accurate information.

Distant observer

A distant observer may be watching their friends adventuring into the digital world from further away, wondering what it's all about. They may have some doubts about constantly changing digital solutions and services, or they just can't be interested in them when the world seems to work fine without, too.

A distant observer does not get extremely excited about new technology. On the other hand, they understand that certain basic skills and the ability to ask for help or support are becoming more and more important as more physical service points are closing.

Profile test reveals which group you belong in

DVV has produced a profile test. Ten questions reveal what kind of a digital user you are. As a result, the test gives the respondent's digital support profile: one of these four.

The profile test can be found at https://digiprofiili.dvv.fi/en/

2 Digital support trials in companies and communities

In order to organise efficient digital support, information on the need for support in companies and communities is needed; in what matters and in what ways the support is needed. The survey Digital competence of companies and communities, published in 2020, found that small and local actors were more likely to need support in the transition to a digital operating environment. Challenges are related to the accessibility of digital support and the correct targeting of support.

During 2021, we carried out several trials to find solutions to challenges related to digital support. The trials were targeted at authorities, representatives of sports associations, hair salon entrepreneurs and property owners. Through the trials, we wanted to test the expected solution, operating model or concept in practice. We wanted to eliminate uncertainty and to collect sufficient understanding and evidence to decide whether to continue development.

The trials taught us many lessons on both the need for digital support and the challenges of organising it. We already knew that support was available but finding it at a local level proved to be a problem. Companies and communities do not feel that they have a platform where all the possible digital support would be available. The aim of the trials was to find solutions for finding the best practices for digital support and to make recommendations based on them. The trials reminded us of one important matter: people do not want digital support, they want to use services easily.

It is difficult to define the borderline between digital skills and the skills of using services. When the customer is not familiar with the service process, the need for support for both using the services and using the digital services is emphasised. This is the case for many new entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with an immigrant background. The authorities hope that digital support could be better defined and harmonised in order to facilitate their own work. There is a need for an exchange of information between authorities and for building a shared situational picture.

One of the important lessons of the trials is that correctly targeted communication with clear and encouraging content encourages the use of digital tools and solutions. Peer support helps eliminate prejudice and encourages people to use digital services. Concrete experiences are always the most effective.

Tests related to digital skills require a correct, reliable relationship between the sender and the recipient. Self-assessments and independent learning reach only some of the people who need digital support. However, as part of a wider range of methods, they work well.

WHAT ABOUT MVP?

Experiments often refer to the term MVP, which stands for ”Minimum Viable Product”. MVP helps to determine the viability of a new concept as quickly as possible in the most agile manner possible. MVP is the lightest possible implementation of a concept that reflects production of value for the customer in terms of learning and further action.

Digital support network - towards easier services through cooperation

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

The Digital support survey that we carried out in 2020 highlighted that there are many different kinds of support providers, support forms and operating models. Activities and development are too niched down, and the support providers have development ideas that they want to share but they do not always have the tools or a suitable forum available.

Digital support has long been developed in various networks. For the first time, we invited the authorities producing online services for those engaged in business to reflect on and solve challenges related to the efficient provision of services and digital support. The objectives of the trial were to examine the best ways of maintaining and developing the national network of digital support, to learn the best ways of implementing network activities and to describe the network's operating model with its roles and responsibilities.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

To create a network, we invited authorities providing digital services for business operators to join, such as the Finnish Tax Administration, Kela, DVV, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre), the Finnish Patent and Registration Office, rural administration and municipalities. Three facilitated workshops were organised for the network to work on different digital support themes. The members of the network selected the development themes to be worked on together. The work of the network through the workshops provided a clear structure for promoting development themes together. The development was strongly inclusive and based on joint planning. Sharing and creating a shared understanding of digital support was a key challenge that we tackled.

KEY FINDINGS

The operating model trials challenged people to think critically about the activities of the national network in regard to digital support and the development of digital support. The trial progressed in a way that was defined together with the participants. A large number of shared needs and objectives were identified with the operators, for example in terms of situational overview data.

The network found an initial shared purpose and the first relevant development themes. The trial also inspired the participants to continue working in the network and achieved concrete outputs, such as the definition of digital support, data areas that support harmonisation and that can be shared in the network, and a survey framework measuring digital support competence. The workshop model received good feedback: practical work was appreciated.

Digital skills test and recommendations for developing digital skills by associations under SUL

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

Especially small and local sports clubs often work alone to solve the challenges of digitalisation. The hypothesis was that clubs would start using digital solutions faster if targeted and needs-based recommendations were offered.

During the trial, representatives of clubs were asked to assess their level of digital skills and to identify digital development areas. The trial also encouraged people to read support material related to digital competence and to take action to develop the digital skills level of the club.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

We created an online survey covering 20 questions (see appendices) for the digital skill level self-assessment of clubs. The respondent assessed the level of the club's digital skills by answering questions about the use of digital systems (e.g. member register), communication and cooperation (e.g. electronic enrolment system), and drivers and obstacles to digital development (e.g. competence of members). If the respondent's replies were below the pre-defined target level, the survey results were followed by recommendations that guided the respondent to the support, materials and contacts available. The digital skills test was shared in the Finnish Athletics Federation's (SUL) newsletter, social media channels, and through targeted e-mails to club leaders.

KEY FINDINGS

Despite the incentives, the biggest challenge was to get clubs to open the test. The click-through rates from the newsletter and Facebook remained low. The highest number of clicks was from the direct e-mails from SUL to the sports clubs leaders.

The reasons for the low number of respondents were collected in a feedback survey and interviews. Sports clubs receive a lot of messages, and a self-assessment only activates certain types of respondents. In addition, some felt that as an operator, SUL was too distant: The interviews revealed that clubs have little interest in interacting with messages from federations, and they prefer acting independently.

In order to obtain the greatest benefit from this type of digital support, the sender must be relevant to the recipient. It is also important to utilise different channels extensively. As regards the recommendations and actions, the trial produced the expected result: 70% of the respondents found the test useful. Each respondent received recommendations for an area of development. The content links in the recommendations were clicked almost as many times as the test had been completed, i.e. the recommendations had been reviewed and interesting issues studied further. In the feedback survey, the majority of respondents reported that they had saved the recommendations and taken action based on them.

You can do it!

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

The development of digital skills is continuous discovery and learning of new things. Success stories about what digital skills have achieved for individuals as well as for companies and communities are necessary. Stories inspire people, and it is possible to relate to them. A target group with less digital skills, represented in this trial by hair salon entrepreneurs, was encouraged to experiment, try and succeed by telling them a relatable story about their own reference group. Encouraging communication was used to test whether it could promote the introduction of new digital tools.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The trial tested the impact of encouraging communication by producing a video in which a hair salon entrepreneur talks about their initial hesitation and subsequent good experiences in the introduction of an online booking system. The video was emailed to a few thousand Finnish hair salon professionals. In addition, Suomen Hiusyrittäjät ry (the Finnish Hair Salon Entrepreneurs Association) shared a video link in its member newsletter, and a link to a short feedback survey was attached to the video.

KEY FINDINGS

In regard to the impact of the video, the most significant period was immediately after it had been received, and 4/5 of the views of the video took place on the day following the reception at the latest.

The level of digital competence in companies varied a lot. One fifth of the respondents were members of the actual core target group: They did not yet have an online appointment booking system in place. New companies had started their operations with an online booking system. Another tell-tale sign of the differences in the level of digitalisation was also the fact that 2/5 of the companies did not even have an e-mail account, but the owner used their personal address to manage the company's affairs. The reception of the video and the perceived benefit were higher in the core target group than with those who already had an online booking system.

The impact of the video was good. After seeing the video, 3/4 of the target group was considering introducing an online booking system, and more than half also discussed the topic with colleagues, customers or their families.

How to train towards digitalisation in a housing company - training and support for property managers

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

The introduction of digital solutions for housing companies is slow and laborious. The real estate sector is undergoing a transformation and the change should be accelerated. The hypothesis of the trial was that the degree of digitalisation in both housing companies and with property managers would increase if the managers were trained to teach housing companies how to use digital tools. The purpose of the trial was to learn in particular whether the property managers would take heed of advice if they offered clear support and recommendations.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The training method was selected on the basis of an advance survey, which was sent to the member panel of the Finnish Real Estate Management Federation. The survey provided an opportunity to pre-register for the training. This ensured that there would be sufficient interest. Based on the survey, a combination of training and workshops was selected as the implementation method, in which the pre-enrolled participants were invited to learn and work on relevant material. The topics of the training were selected to be electronic signature, electronic document orders, residents' pages, and remote and hybrid meetings. Of these, remote and hybrid meetings and electronic signatures were selected as topics for the workshop itself due to schedule constraints and the clarity and relevance of the topics. In addition, property managers were provided with training and practical tools to implement training for housing companies. The purpose of the training/workshop implementation was to test the existing training material and to monitor whether the property managers would start using it to train housing companies. In addition, the aim was to improve the training material together.

KEY FINDINGS

The advance survey helped to find the most important topics for the training and ensured that the property managers were interested in the topic and this method of providing digital support. The advance survey received 32 responses from 88 recipients, 75% of who said that they needed information and training on how to train housing companies in these topics. 75% (24 respondents) also pre-registered for the training. Based on a follow-up survey carried out four weeks after the training, 67% of the property managers had utilised the material, showed it to their colleagues or produced new material based on it to train housing company boards in the use of digital tools. Even the property managers that had not yet had the chance to read through the materials again were planning on utilising them. 100% of the respondents recommended the workshop to their colleagues.

The property managers found the topics of the training to be highly relevant. In particular, the sections on practical digital tools, such as remote and hybrid meetings and electronic signatures, were seen as easy-to-apply to practical management work. The applicability of the sections on learning and supporting it was less clear, even though the theme was seen as important. The trial showed that property managers have an interest in utilising digital tools both in their own activities and in working with customers, i.e. housing companies (boards). The ready-made material makes it easier to provide training on new tools.

Digital support map

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

Through the trial, we wanted to see if a visual presentation of digital support providers in map form would be the solution to the problem that even though there is a lot of digital support available, it is not always easy to find. The aim of the trial was to gather scattered information together and provide tools to go forward, not to offer digital support in itself.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The creation of the digital support map prototype began from the perspective of content: What types of categories of support exist, and what would be the smartest way to categorise providers from the perspective of users? Different iterations led to the following model consisting of four groups:

Digital support providers for permits and reports (establishing a company or a community)
Digital support providers related to subsidies, funding and applications
Digital support providers related to digital practices and tools; and
Digital support providers related to special operational situations

All four groups shared the same goal to produce interesting information about three questions: what is digital support offered for, how digital support is available, and where to find more information. In order for the map to serve its target group, it must combine clarity, ease-of-viewing and sufficiently accurate information. The map is given to companies and communities during their establishment process.

KEY FINDINGS

In the beginning stages of the map trial, we created a table of different digital support providers. The table proved to be a challenging entity to fill in and maintain. This is why the trial was also considered too large to be implemented within the scope of the project. However, there is a need for it, and the matter should be resolved as its own entity in the future.

Encouraging people to respond to the survey

WHICH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED?

The quantification of digital support profiles in cooperation with the Finnish Enterprise Agency can be considered a part of the trials during the project. The challenge in this trial, too, was to involve the customers of digital support. The challenge was already acknowledged in the early stages, so we focused on motivating the customers of the enterprise agency to respond to the profile test survey.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The aim was to use methods of “nudging” methodology to increase the number of responses. In nudging, people are guided to make solutions that are beneficial to themselves by modifying the choice architecture - that is, by highlighting elements that bring both parties towards the desired solution. These factors are typically linked to four factors: ease, attractiveness, social motivators and time.

The ease perspective was brought up in the invitation to the survey by emphasising its short duration: ”It takes only 5 minutes to respond.” It was important to highlight this because experience shows that people are tired of overly long surveys. Benefits were used as a way to attract users to take the survey: ”Thank you for your answers beforehand. Your responses help us provide better support with e-services in the future.” In addition, gift cards worth EUR 50 were drawn among the respondents.

Local level invitations were used as a social motive. This means that the invitations were not sent the easiest way, i.e. generically on behalf of the entire Finnish Enterprise Agency, but at a local level, signed by a familiar party. A reminder was also sent stating how many colleagues had already responded and had an impact on the development of digital support. As a time motivator, the invitation itself and the reminder highlighted the limited amount of time: ”The survey closes on Friday 30 April, so please respond soon!”.

KEY FINDINGS

In the beginning Motivation based on the nudging method worked. Within the short deadline, almost 4% of the recipients responded, which is a good result for the entrepreneur target group, given that the relevance of the approximately 3,000 email addresses used was not checked.

Because the results were good, motivating respondents through nudging should continue to be utilised in trials in which it is important to get responses. A good lesson to be learned from this and other trials is that in principle, participants do not find the trials interesting. Their benefits should therefore be highlighted and understood in order to achieve the desired end result.

The objectives of the trials and measuring the fulfilment of the objectives

The success and results of the trials were examined using trial-specific indicators. There were three observation periods for the objectives and indicators: the situation before, during and after the trial.

The objectives and indicators of digital support trials are linked to the main objectives of digital support. If the indicators and objectives can be linked to them, there is a high probability that the development work will be effective.

There is not one correct way to assess the effectiveness of the trials: The action, target group, desired change and time span affect what should be measured and how. Measuring activities and opinions tells its own story about change.

The definitions of objectives and indicators are a part of the trial which means that the functionality of the indicators must be assessed in the same way as the objective. The indicators of experimental development should be broader than ultimately necessary to also learn from the methods of measurement. Examples of indicators for the digital support trials and estimates of their effectiveness are presented in the following table.

TABLE 1. Examples of indicators for the digital support trials

TRIAL	THE DESIRED CHANGE AND THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE DIGITAL SUPPORT IT AFFECTS	OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS	ESTIMATE OF THE USABILITY OF THE INDICATOR FOR OPERATORS OFFERING DIGITAL SUPPORT
The digital skills test for SUL's sports clubs and recommended actions	Identifying the development needs of digital competence **Competence:** Improving the digital maturity of businesses and communities	Number of responses more than 10% of recipients Based on the responses, more than 90% of the respondents receive recommendations for the competence areas they assessed to be the lowest	The number of respondents is easy to monitor in tests and surveys; the only requirement is having a suitable tool. Responding to the test does not yet indicate that the respondent is going to make changes based on it. Identifying respondents' needs requires a good understanding of possible needs and the recommended level of competence. After these have been defined, the skill level is easy to verify. Identifying competence needs motivates to change but does not guarantee that anything really changes

TRIAL	THE DESIRED CHANGE AND THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE DIGITAL SUPPORT IT AFFECTS	OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS	ESTIMATE OF THE USABILITY OF THE INDICATOR FOR OPERATORS OFFERING DIGITAL SUPPORT
The digital skills test for SUL's sports clubs and recommended actions	Taking action based on recommendations from the test **Competence:** Improving the digital maturity of businesses and communities	Review of the recommendations, each recipient has opened a link to a recommendation that is relevant to them Opened links that lead to recommendations on how to proceed. A follow-up survey asking respondents to report the actions taken	It is easy to monitor if the recipients have reviewed the recommendations using the links created for the purpose (e.g. Bit.ly); longer term monitoring requires registration in the tool. Review of the recommendations is already a strong indication of an intended change. The actions reported in the follow-up survey are a strong indication of an actual change or at least the start of it. The number of responses to the follow-up survey is often too low to show significant results; possible incentives should be attached to the survey. The entity should also be designed in such a way that the respondent has no reason to give incorrect information about the actions taken.
The digital skills test for SUL's sports clubs and recommended actions	Assessment of the usefulness of the test after getting the test results **Quality:** Easy use of services and digital support on all channels	After getting the test results, a question to the respondents: Did you find the test useful? Answer yes/ no, target: Over 70% felt it was useful	Easy to implement as long as the schedule works well in regard to responding to the test, obtaining and reviewing the results and receiving a response to the question about the test's usefulness. Measures the immediate feeling of the test's quality, not the actions it inspires.

TRIAL	THE DESIRED CHANGE AND THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE DIGITAL SUPPORT IT AFFECTS	OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS	ESTIMATE OF THE USABILITY OF THE INDICATOR FOR OPERATORS OFFERING DIGITAL SUPPORT
You can do it! Video on online booking systems for hair salons	Taking actions leading to the introduction of an online booking system **Competence:** Improving the digital maturity of businesses and communities	Video views relative to the number of recipients % of respondents who do not have an online booking system	The number of views is easy to monitor. Watching the video does not yet indicate that the respondent is going to make changes based on it. Indicates that the relevant target group has been reached, easily feasible.
You can do it! Video on online booking systems for hair salons	Taking actions leading to the introduction of an online booking system **Competence:** Improving the digital maturity of businesses and communities	Number of actions reported on the basis of the feedback survey in respondents without an online booking system	The actions reported in the follow-up survey are a strong indication of an actual change or at least the start of it. The number of responses to the follow-up survey is often too low to show significant results. Possible incentives should be attached to the follow-up survey. The entity should also be designed in such a way that the respondent has no reason to give incorrect information.
You can do it! Video on online booking systems for hair salons	How interesting the target group found the content of the video **Quality:** Easy use of services and digital support on all channels	A follow-up survey asking how interesting the respondents found the video on a scale of 1-5	Easy to implement, the time between watching the video and taking the follow-up survey must be short. Measures the feeling of the video's quality, not the actions it inspires.

What did we learn from the trials? Challenges and solutions of digital support

As a result of the trials, we confirmed the need for external support in using digital tools for small companies and communities. Sole traders do not always have the time to develop digital skills or introduce new tools even if they would have the motivation to do so. External incentives are often needed. For example, in the case of hair salon entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs became interested in introducing new digital tools when they received concrete information.

For companies and communities, the need for digital support is often targeted on the basis of the tools that benefit their operation. It is difficult to make acquisitions if the entrepreneur does not know how to describe their needs or there are not enough resources available in terms of competence, personnel or finances. External incentives, peer communications or other communications directed at a specific sector or limited target group support small operators in making choices. The support provider and inspiration may be an umbrella organisation, trade union or other party that is familiar with the sector in question. Another entrepreneur can also encourage and motivate the use of digital tools by sharing their experiences of the related benefits. The authorities also highlighted the need for support for small and start-up entrepreneurs. This does not mean that their level of digital skills would be lower than that of others; when establishing a new business, each company has to learn how to use certain services for the first time, and therefore the need for support is emphasised.

The supply of digital support is as fragmented as the needs of companies and communities. Digital support providers, especially the authorities (the target group of the network trial), have a strong willingness to define digital support in the same way and to develop digital support to be more consistent and customer-oriented. For those who need digital support, centralising digital support is not the right solution. Instead, they prefer to receive digital support from parties that they already know, i.e. friends, family, and previous cooperation partners. This was the case, for example, in the trials involving SUL and hair salon entrepreneurs.

Digital support should not be a separate service that customers need to search for outside of a digital service or solution. At best, digital support has been integrated into the digital service, and from this perspective, the fragmentation of providers is justified. In this way, digital support is offered in as many places as where digital services and solutions are offered. The offering of digital support needs a structure through which different forms of support can be better highlighted. Such a structure may include the most popular ways of providing digital support derived from digital profiles. The structure can also be used in a user-oriented manner to determine that digital support is available in a relevant way and in relevant channels, depending on the channel and type of support that different profiles are likely to need.

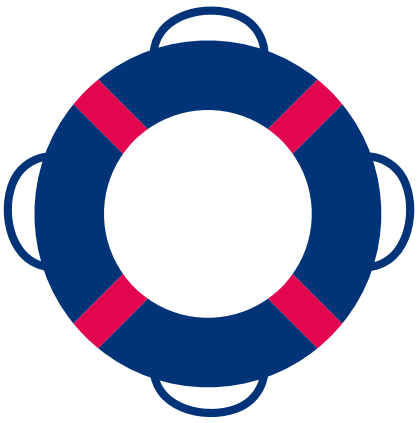
Issues with digital support are related to the ways of finding it and targeting of support. If there is a problem, the user does not necessarily know where to find support or that it is available at all. The digital skills trial of sports clubs in cooperation with SUL revealed the importance of a proper relationship between the provider and recipient. Clubs prefer to receive support

close and locally, rather from sports associations that the central organisation. Understanding the context and its visibility in the provision of support play a key role. Not everything can be resolved by ”central government”.

In the case of the hair salon trial, support for the introduction of digital tools was provided by the trade union that was familiar with the everyday challenges of hair salon entrepreneurs. In this trial, the implementation method was also important, i.e. that an entrepreneur in the same field told about their personal experiences of the initial ideas and experiences of the implementation of digital tools.

The challenges of providing easy-to-find support and targeting it are made even more difficult by the fact that users rarely look for digital support. For companies and communities, the need for digital support is more linked to the introduction and use of digital services and tools. Companies and communities do not need to recognise that they have received digital support. It is more important that they have sufficient expertise at their disposal to acquire and introduce the right tools and other digitalisation that supports their operations.

Making digital support easy to find is a challenge for both those who need support and those who offer it. When it comes to smooth service guidance, digital support providers should know how and where customers who need digital support find it. This was realised in the work of the authorities network. In the correct targeting of support, it should be possible to combine the competence level, digital profile and service of the person in need of the support with which they need it.



3 Conclusions

The need for digital support and the quality of services go hand in hand

We all need digital support - as a private citizen or as a company/community representative. Needs vary, and even more skilled people need support because new things are new for everyone. The need and form of support vary. An important part of this also involves the quality of services: their usability and accessibility. A better quality of services can reduce or even completely remove the need for support. Intuitive services with clear terminology and ease-of-use are good enough to partly eliminate the need for digital support.

This topic was researched during the YritysDigi project which is a part of the programme for promoting digitalisation. Of the nearly 2,000 e-services reported for the project, only a little less than 30% met the requirements of the current legislation. At the current pace of development, the objective of making public services available to companies in digital form by 2023 will not be realised.

Shortcomings in the quality and usability of the services lead to failure demand. It occurs when the service system is unable to respond to customers' needs, in which case the customer's expectations and needs do not match the provision of services, and the customer constantly needs to use the services again and again - often with additional requirements. This makes the customer experience worse, puts strain on the service system and increases costs.

A confusing user experience may lead to the need for digital support even if improving the service quality would have been a sufficient solution. User-oriented development can reduce the need for digital support and allocate resources to people who need personal support.

Towards uniform digital support models and requirements

The starting point for the development of digital support is an open and continuous dialogue between operators that develop and offer digital services and digital support customers. The content of digital support differs from one organisation to another depending on whether the support is help for using the organisation's own services, support provided by the authorities or more extensive development of digital skills.

Organising digital support requires expertise and commitment from organisations. Regardless of the organisation, using services is easier for those who need digital support if the forms of support are consistent. At best, digital support is an integral part of the service experience and not a separate service that the customer should specifically look for.

By networking and sharing good practices, organisations can harmonise their digital support models. Organisations can learn from each other when it comes to identifying the needs for

digital support, supporting the use of services and encouraging the development of digital competence. From the perspective of customers, i.e. companies and communities, this refers to a well-defined need and targeted support.

Although digital support models aim for consistency, their fragmentation must also be partially accepted. The content of the support varies depending on different factors, such as whether the provider of support is an authority guiding in the use of their own services or an operator providing e.g. a financial administration service to a company. Available resources also depend on whether an operator is a national, regional or local level operator. Support may also be personalised in certain sectors, such as in housing companies where services are provided by property managers.

A shared goal for both those who need support and those who provide it is making everyday activities as easy as possible and having sufficient digital skills to ensure this. In order to ensure smooth digital services in companies and communities, it would be good to dissolve boundaries between responsibilities and move towards a shared responsibility in digital support.

Uniform methods of providing digital support make the everyday lives easier for both those who need support and those who provide it. Sharing good practices between support providers facilitates development and improves the service-using experience for those who need support. At best, digital support has been integrated within the services so that the company or community does not have to look for it separately.

Good digital support means taking different needs into account

Digital support does not only mean providing basic skills for those taking their first digital steps. This is a broader task which includes guidance in the procurement and use of digital tools, equipment and software that are essential for the operations of companies and organisations.

It is important that digital support take different users and needs into account and to correctly target support to the current needs of companies and communities. Identifying needs and providing the right support requires sufficient knowledge of users and their activities. Without sufficient customer-orientation and understanding, the correct allocation of digital support is challenging.

Appropriately targeted digital support offers not only help in using the services of a company or community but also support in maintaining digital skills. It often also encourages people to learn new digital competence.

In companies and communities, digital support may be needed for the introduction or selection of new software and tools, for utilising digitalisation to support operations, or for services that are used less frequently. Sometimes motivation and encouragement for the introduction of digital steps or new tools is also needed. Responding to these needs requires different forms of support and network-based cooperation between digital support providers.

In order to develop digital support in a needs-oriented manner, all operators involved in digital support are needed.

Those offering digital support and developing digital services should take into account the different needs of customers. The right support facilitates the use of services and encourages companies and communities to develop their competence.

The practical implementation method of digital support matters

For those who need digital support, it is not enough that digital support is available - often the form of digital support is even more important. In the last decade, the number of channels has increased and new forms of communication have developed alongside the old ones. Users now need to manage more service channels at the same time. Digital support is offered in several forms, from personal guidance to video instructions. Different types of support work for different profiles and needs.

Digital support also means communication - motivating, encouraging and inspiring experimenting with the tools and finding relevant benefits through new operating methods. Acknowledging the importance of better digital competence is part of the goal to ensure that all citizens and representatives of companies and communities have sufficient digital skills to be able to use services easily.

As a general rule, when digital support is needed, it is needed immediately and in the context in which the user is in. Types of support should consider this need. For example, in the online channels of official services, the support may be in a different website address than the user. This is a problem if the user wants support in connection with a specific detail in the service and does not want to leave the website. Therefore, support and instructions should be provided in context. An effective solution to this is providing a chat where the user can easily get more information on a specific service point. Digital support requires competence related to substance but also pedagogical competence: how things can be explained and instructed in a way that considers the competence level of different user groups and the level of support provided.

It is easy to use a service that operates on a familiar user logic. An interesting example of a uniform digital service experience is the so-called mono brand strategy of the UK public administration: The digital user experience and services are largely standardised, and the customer's operating logic is uniform between different authorities and thus familiar and easy to use.

Digital support is part of the development of services. The support should be designed directly as part of the services - not as a separate entity. Offering digital support should be comprehensive - steering away from limits of responsibility towards shared responsibility.

4 Situational overview

Situational overview of digital support

The situational overview of digital support for companies and communities provides information on the trends in digitalisation and drivers that reflect the predictions of the future, based on which the main objectives of digital support are formed. The situational overview is information that changes over time and reflects the phenomena of the development of digitalisation.

The main objective is to anticipate the need for digital support. For example, the following indicators can be used to anticipate needs:

- The transfer of official services to digital channels increases the need for digital support, the number of customers in digital channels increases
- Improving digital competence in companies and communities proactively reduces the need for digital support or shifts it to the challenges of higher-level digital competence
- High-quality, user-oriented digital services reduce the need for digital support for using services
- In addition, ensuring the supply of digital support and its customer-oriented development ensure high-quality and sufficient digital support for those who need it.

The drivers of digital support indicate the way that support should be guided to progress in the future. The digital support measures cannot directly influence the development of the drivers.

- The accessibility of digital services must always be ensured. This guides the development of digital services, related support and the use of resources
- The need for digital support by customer profile helps to understand what kind of support should be offered and how. Profiles refer to identified digital profiles (see Introduction, Who needs digital support?) and other relevant classifications, such as the size of the company/community or even the division into central organisation/local organisation
- The funding priorities steer the focus of development and opportunities for the continuous development of digital support.

Researching the amount of digital support would provide information on the resources tied to digital support. However, in regard to the objectives of the support, this amount is not a perfect indicator, as it cannot be explicitly said whether the amount of digital support should be increased or reduced.

The need for digital support and the amount of digital support provided in this way depend on the users' digital competence, the quality of the available digital services, the fluency of the transaction and the number of digital services available.

In practice, the situational overview of digital support could currently focus on four areas:

- Number, quality and accessibility of digital services
- Digital competence and the need for digital support
- Offering of digital support
- Funding for digital support

Based on our assessment, it would be possible to compile the situational overview from different sources. However, when utilising situational overview data, it should be taken into account that the used sources differ from each other not only by the methods of data collection but also by the prioritised areas. The first situational overview will be completed in 2022.

TABLE 2. Research topics, data sources ja identified shortcomings in the situational overview

RESEARCH TOPIC	STUDIES AND DATA SOURCES	IDENTIFIED SHORTCOMINGS IN THE SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW
Number of digital services: Transferring official services to a digital channel	Service Promise (Ministry of Finance), Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK)	The % share of central government and municipalities in the services offered in digital channels? Amount of digital support provided
Quality of digital services: Easy access to services and digital support on all channels	Quality Tool (Digital and Population Data Services Agency), Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK, ETLA Economic Research)	Understanding the quality of the digital support offered
Digital skills: Need-oriented improvement in the level of digital maturity in companies and communities	Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK, ETLA Economic Research), Digital competence in Finnish SMEs 2019 (Suomen Yrittäjät), Järjestödigi (TIEKE, Viestintä-Piritta, Vitec), Organization Barometer (Soste) , Digital competence of companies and communities - Recommendations on organising digital support for business operators (Digital and Population Data Services Agency)	

RESEARCH TOPIC	STUDIES AND DATA SOURCES	IDENTIFIED SHORTCOMINGS IN THE SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW
Offering of digital support: Digital support providers' commitment to digital support and its customer-oriented development	Service promise report (Ministry of Finance), Digital competence of companies and communities, the need for digital support in 2020 (Digital and Population Data Services Agency), Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK, ETLA Economic Research), Municipalities	Customer-oriented development of digital support based on customer profile needs Development of digital services in a user-oriented manner and in connection with services, digital support and its quality.
Accessibility of digital services	Service promise report (Ministry of Finance, Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK, ETLA Economic Research), Järjestödigi (TIEKE, Viestintä-Piritta, Vitec), Reports published by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland	
Need for digital support by customer profile	Digital competence of companies and communities - Recommendations on organising digital support for business operators (Digital and Population Data Services Agency)	The need for digital support by customer profile should be researched more extensively in the entire field of digital support and compare it with the existing offer
Funding priorities	Digital Barometer (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Suomen Yrittäjät (Entrepreneurs in Finland), EK, ETLA Economic Research), Information from financiers	

The current state of digital support guides its future development

The situational overview is assessed annually and whenever new, significant information on the drivers for digital support is available to ensure it is up-to-date.

TABLE 3. Trends, main objectives and drivers relevant to the situational overview of digital support

KEY TRENDS OF DIGITAL SUPPORT	MAIN OBJECTIVES OF DIGITAL SUPPORT	DRIVERS OF DIGITAL SUPPORT	KEY MEASURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL SUPPORT
Expectations for time- and place-independent services	**Quantity:** Transferring official services to a digital channel	Accessibility of digital services	Harmonising the supply of digital support
From customer service to self-service and automation	**Quality:** Easy use of services on all channels	Need for digital support by customer segment	Targeting the provision of digital support in a need-oriented manner
Digitalisation is everywhere	**Competence:** Improving the digital maturity of businesses and communities	Funding priorities	Improving the national communication and ease-of-finding of digital support
The digital security environment will become more complex	**Providers:** Providers of digital support commit to digital support and its customer-oriented development		

Deciding the main objectives and priorities of the situational overview

Changes in the drivers of digital support affect the definition of the objectives and situational overview of the support. The definition also depends on, for example, whether changes in the accessibility or funding of digital services have been identified in the prioritisation of different customer profiles. Funding allocated for digital support and the digitalisation of government services can be examined, for example, at the beginning of the budget year.

Reviewing the data sources of the situational overview

The data sources identified in the situational overview of digital support are completed throughout the year at different intervals. The information sources are mainly from parties other than DVV and examine a broader phenomenon than digital support. For example, the Digital Barometer is an annual study and publication by ETLA Economic Research. It is said to be the describer and predictor of digital Finland, as it measures the utilisation of digitalisation.

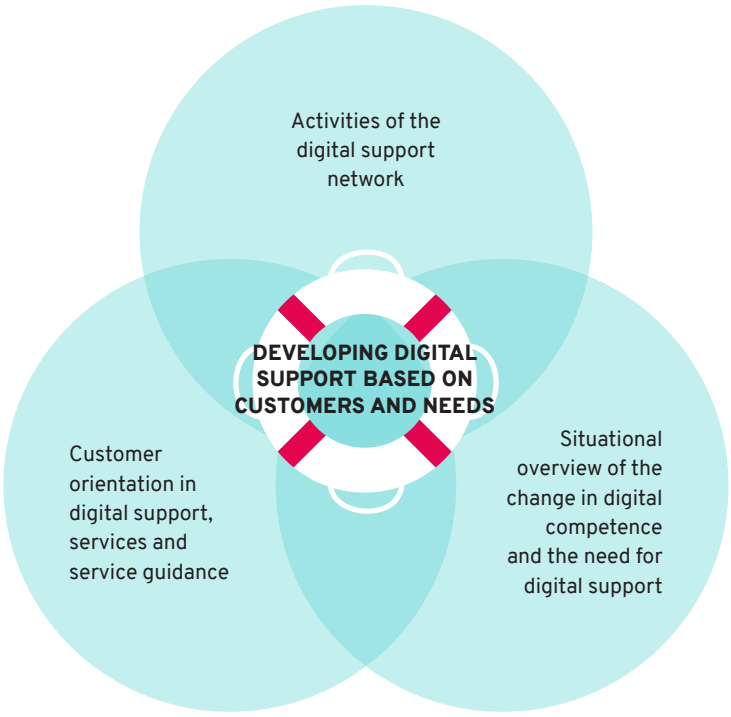
Information essential to digital support is taken from identified data sources. The digital support network clarifies what new research data means in practice and what action will be taken based on it. The digital support network examines the Järjestödigi survey, after which the significance of the results is analysed, the necessary actions are identified, and it is decided how they should be implemented.

Identifying missing overview data and conducting research

The digital support network assesses and monitors the development of the situational overview under the direction of the DVV and identifies the necessary additional clarifications related to the main objectives, priorities and measures of the digital support.

Further research is planned based on needs. Identified needs for further studies include measuring the quality of digital support and needs-based development. Methods may include, for example, a customer survey developed together with authorities, a qualitative interview study for a specific target group or the regular inclusion of questions related to digital support in studies carried out by other parties, such as the Digital Barometer for SMEs and Järjestödigi.

5 Development themes of digital support



We identified three development themes in the results of the digital support trials.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DIGITAL SUPPORT NETWORK

The digital support network can also be extended beyond authorities to other organisations involved in the digital support of companies and communities. This requires that the network's tools are developed to support it. In addition, the mono brand strategy, the harmonisation of the digital support provided by authorities - where applicable - would provide a more uniform service experience for the customer.

Identifying the digital support's (service) ecosystem would involve all participants in the joint development of the activities. The Digital and Population Services Agency should also define its role in relation to the other members of the ecosystem.

The network should share good practices and other information related to the development of digital support. In addition, competence related to the provision of digital support should be identified and developed in organisations. These themes can be more strongly supported by expanding and developing the network's activities.

CUSTOMER ORIENTATION IN DIGITAL SUPPORT, SERVICES AND SERVICE GUIDANCE

Ensuring and developing a customer-oriented approach has been identified as an important development target for digital support. As a target group, those engaged in business activities

are a very extensive and heterogeneous group, but the need for using services is secondary, as everyone also needs to use services as a regular citizen. By improving the customer-oriented approach, service guidance between digital support providers can also be developed.

Customer-oriented development of digital support and services should be supported. In this context, it would be important to identify information related to the quality of services and to share it. The development should take into account both strategic, tactical and operational levels. A Customer Orientation Monitoring Group will be established to ensure that the development of digital support continues in this way. Key persons representing different people who need digital support will be invited to join the group.

SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE CHANGE IN DIGITAL COMPETENCE AND THE NEED FOR DIGITAL SUPPORT

To support the development of digital support, targeted information on the change in digital competence and the need for digital support is needed. A situational overview and a data utilisation plan will be developed for digital support, taking into account the definition of digital competence at the EU level. The aim is to implement continuous measurements and introduce the situational overview.

Digital support task reacts to a changing operating environment

At the time of writing this review, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency is about to prepare the permanent task of digital support. The role of digital support in enabling the use of digital services and developing digital competence has been identified and the aim is to strengthen it. In the future, the development of digital support and digital competence for business operators will be a permanent part of the Digital and Population Data Services Agency's task of providing digital support.

The contents of digital competence will change. Skills and competence must be maintained and developed at the same pace as digitalisation progresses. In the Need for Digital Support for Young People survey (2021), young people identified, among other things, algorithmic literacy and critical media literacy as digital skills of the future. The role of digital support is also to illuminate the digital skills needed in the future and to offer opportunities for teaching and maintaining them.

The digital support project for business operators has been welcomed both by digital support providers and those who need it. The activities have created new understanding and lessons about digital competence and the necessary support for those engaged in business activities. The recommendations presented in this publication on organising digital support for businesses and their development targets provide a good basis for a permanent task.

A broad and diverse target group sets its own requirements for the development of digital support. Network cooperation also provides a good starting point for this. In principle, no one needs more support but rather a smoother way to use services.

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