



# Digital Inclusion in Low-Income Communities

## NESC Presentation

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# About An Cosán (*The Path*)

35 YEARS...



...*“if poverty is to be transformed, then education is key”* ...



**191**  
Community partners in our national network!

← **Educational Technology** →



## ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

*Transforming lives through Face-to-Face and Online Community Education*



## EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

*Providing the highest quality early years education & care so our children have the best start in life*



**COUNSELLING, FAMILY SUPPORT, MENTORING, COACHING, TUTORING, INTERNSHIPS**

*Providing the supports learners and families need to achieve their best outcomes*

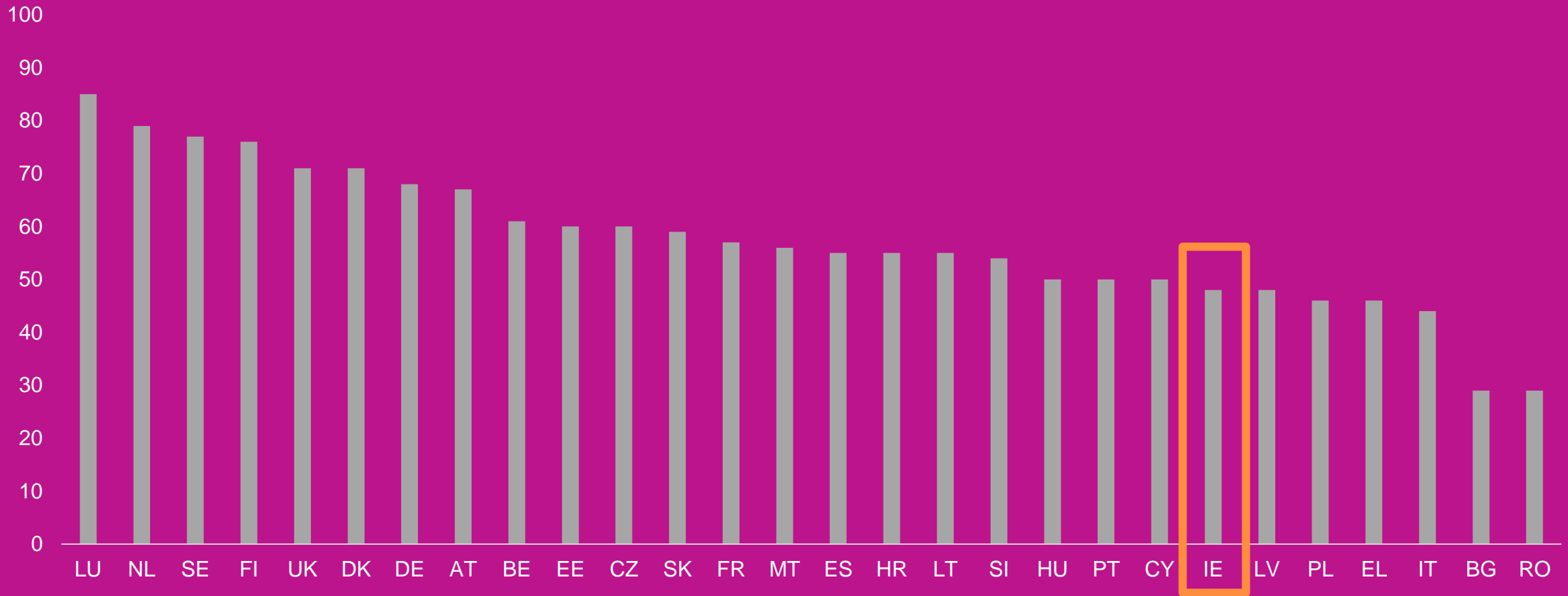
# Some context...



**So... why is An  
Cosán here today  
to talk about  
*digital inclusion in  
low income  
communities?...***

# IN 2018, IRELAND RANKED BELOW THE EUROPEAN AVERAGE OF 57% FOR BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS

% of the adult population with at least basic digital skills across Europe (2018)



# ACCENTURE & AN COSÁN –

**A COMMUNITY / CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP DEDICATED TO IMPROVING DIGITAL & EMPLOYMENT SKILLS FOR 10 YEARS ...**

but **9/10**

of jobs in the future will require some level of digital skills...

...while only **half**

of Ireland's adult population have at least **BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS** today



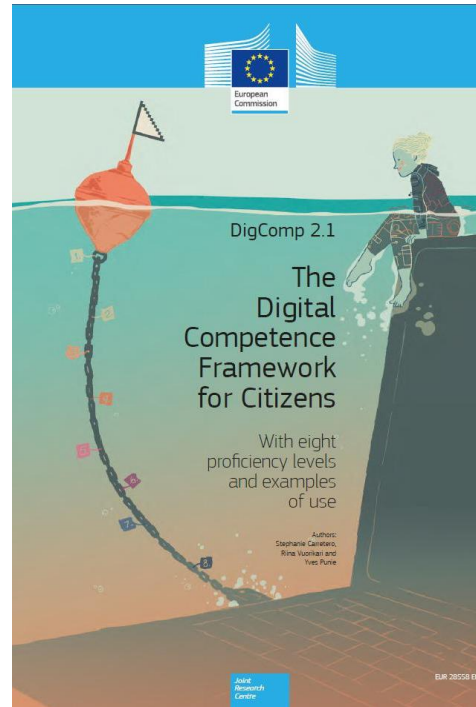
# Accenture – Bridging the Digital Divide (2020)



# Digital Inclusion is not just an Irish challenge...



ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL



Digital competence is “**a universal and basic need** for all citizens for **working, living and learning** in the knowledge society” – *European JRC*

## THE IRISH TIMES



Republic has one of the lowest levels of basic digital skills

European Commission published 2018 Digital Economy and Society Index on Friday

© Fri, May 18, 2018, 13:48

The Digital Divide is a barrier; impacting opportunities and advancement of our learners, 1-2-1 wraparound digital supports are unfunded, and it's exacerbating social exclusion in 21<sup>st</sup> century low-income communities

# We wanted to help people take the first step to...

- understand their current digital capability
- appreciate the digital skills they have
- see how their initial skills can be transferable
- appreciate there are a range of competences needed in the 21st century
- and fill any gaps in their basic digital skills





# What we did...

- **Research, market scans & testing** for suitable assessment solutions, skills framework analysis, training needs analysis, community-based consultations...
- **Learner workshops** – to adapt DigComp into real-world context based on community-user experiences (UX)
- **Ed & Ed Tech workshops** with Accenture technical development teams – prototype launch
- MVP – develop a **proof of concept**
- Created a **national - targeted - train-the-trainer programme** for tutors in community organisations & FET sector
- Raised **awareness** and harvested **feedback**





In 2019, An Cosán envisioned an Ireland where everyone can avail of the **life-enhancing benefits of having the digital skills** they need!...

Today over **3,336** people have used our Digital Stepping Stones assessment tool **to understand their personal level of digital competence...** and their gaps!

# Perspectives from the frontline of digital inclusion:

“Digital is **the primary reason for connecting** with our wraparound learner support service”

“Having basic IT skills is the **difference between learner progression and stagnation**”...

“People come to me at the last minute because they have to **submit coursework / assignments. Which they can't...**”

“People ask “**what's that squidgy line?**” on text in word processing...”

“Higher Ed Students struggle using **Word**”...

“Devices aren't the issue so much as **need for the tech support**”...

**A lot of people don't make the connection** between learning and having to use tech / devices / digital”...

“It's not an age thing, **it's about the individual's capability**”...

“Many learners **can't type**”

“It requires **consistent, ongoing digital & tech support**”

“The **ramifications of the Digital Divide are huge**; without being able to access other sources of information, **The Sun and The Star is gospel here**”...

“I can **handwrite** and send you a photo of my assignment - **can someone type it up for me?**...”

Many people need **one-to-one support**, but the resources aren't available to provide that level of support”.

“They don't know how to **install software / troubleshoot issues**”

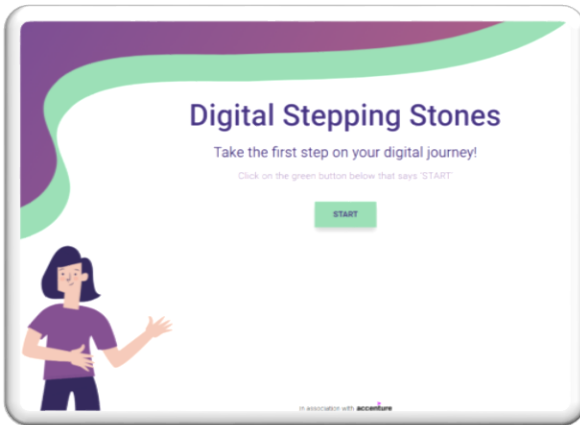
# How does Digital Stepping Stones help?

Our DigComp digital inclusion model uses 'assessment-for-learning'



5 Areas 21 Competences

No registration – simply click start...



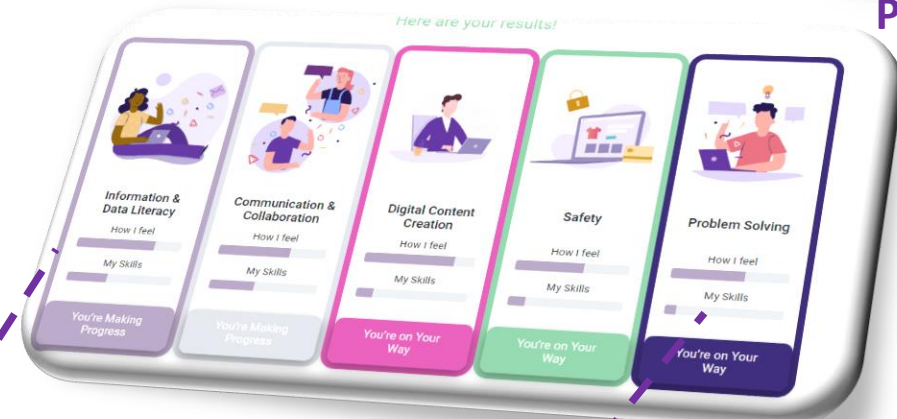
1. How I Feel

2. My Skills




Current Answer	Next Answer
Yes	Yes
I think I can	Yes
I'm not sure I can	Yes
No, I definitely can't	Yes

Personalised Results



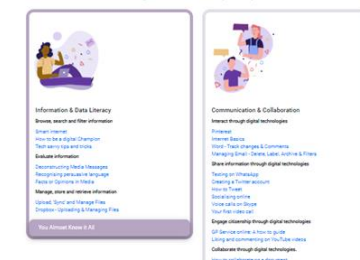
Level of digital confidence

Level of digital competence

  
Approx. 15 mins to complete

Ready To Take The Next Digital Step?

Well done on completing the quiz. Now, why not take the next step on your digital stepping stones with some of the learning links below tailored just for you!



Personal learning links

# FET sector practitioner feedback...

**“This will probably come to be a standard tool for digital assessment across the entire country. Well done on a fantastic piece of work!”** (ETB *Donegal*)

**“I think it would be very useful for the Guidance workers and Community Development team.”** (Local Development, *Wexford*)

**“I am directing learners to it, as part of the process of being considered for a device loan, to support blended learning”**... (ETB, *Limerick*)

**“Digital Stepping Stones is a great tool for ETBs to use with learners & staff.”** (ETB, *Cork*)

**“Our ICT instructor is completing it with learners as part of our ongoing induction programme.”**  
(CTC, *Dublin*)

**“I feel Digital Stepping Stones will be a great asset to us”** (YouthReach, *Dublin*)

**“The Digital Stepping Stones is a great help. It is very user friendly. The hyperlinks section will be so useful.”**  
(FRC, *Meath*)

# An Cosán considerations on the NESC report recommendations

## NESC Report recommendations:

1. A National Strategy for Digital Inclusion & Measurement of Progress

2. Data & Measurement

3. Develop a comprehensive framework to support digital skills progression

4. Support digital inclusion at community level

5. Deliver targeted supports for material access to key groups

6. Enhance guidance for digital and assisted-digital public services & 'complimentary' channels



## An Cosán's suggestions:

✓ **1. Yes. We need a whole-of-society approach to whole of society problem**

✓ **2. Yes. Make sure it's flexible & user-centred**

✓ **3. Yes. DigComp is right there!**

✓ **4. Yes. It needs to include dedicated funding for wraparound support services...**

✓ **5. Yes. But they must be accessible, easy to turnaround as required & fit for purpose.**

✓ **6. Yes. We need to see accessibility & user-centred approach online Gov & public services – not the 'automation of inequality'...**

# Looking ahead...

In order to support digital inclusion at community level

We must call for additional dedicated funding for  
**'digital wraparound supports'**  
at community level



**"A lot of our learners  
don't make the  
connection between  
learning and having to  
use tech / devices /  
digital"...**



**DIGITAL  
ASSESSMENT**

**DIGITAL  
COACHING /  
1-2-1 DIGITAL  
MENTORSHIP**

**DIGITAL  
LEARNING**

**DIGITAL MICRO  
CREDENTIALS**

**Lifelong Learning  
Pathways**

- **ONGOING IT / Ed Tech SUPPORT**
- **TROUBLESHOOTING EXPERTS**
- **RELEVANT SOFTWARE**
- **CONNECTED DEVICES**
- **INTERNET ACCESS**
- *(inc. affordability)*

- **INCLUSION**
- **EMPOWERMENT**
- **RESILIENCE**
- **LIFE SKILLS**
- **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **GROWTH MINDSET**





**Thank you!...**