

AFFECTED BY THE GREY DIGITAL DIVIDE: HOW DIGITAL EXCLUSION PREVENTS OLDER PEOPLE FROM ACCESSING EHEALTH IN CZECHIA

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December 2025

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Co-funded by
the European Union

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In 2026, an amendment to the Digital Healthcare Act (*Zákon o elektronizaci zdravotnictví*) will come into force in Czechia. Among other changes, it will introduce new eHealth services to citizens, such as electronic booking of medical appointments or a new patient portal, aiming to make their access to healthcare easier.¹ However, there are serious doubts about whether and how older citizens will benefit from these adjustments.

This blog post examines the pressing issue of digital exclusion, which reinforces structural inequalities. It focuses specifically on older people in Czechia and examines the barriers they might face when accessing digital healthcare. Simultaneously, it highlights where eHealth inclusion efforts lag and how inclusive access to eHealth is addressed in official Czech documents and strategies.

Unless digital inclusion is strategically prioritised and translated into concrete measures, the existing digital divide could deepen, potentially excluding older citizens in Czechia from essential healthcare services. Even though the issue is recognised in EU digitalisation policy frameworks, the divide remains. This text outlines the key pressure points that should be addressed by the government and included more prominently in public debate, as the issue remains insufficiently acknowledged in Czechia.

1. What is eHealth?

eHealth refers to various tools and services that use information and communication technologies (ICTs) across all levels and processes of healthcare. It offers multiple benefits such as increased efficiency and quality of care, and

¹ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, "Ministerstvo zdravotnictví představilo novelu zákona o elektronizaci zdravotnictví a další projekty digitalizace zdravotnictví," August 22, 2024, <https://mzd.gov.cz/tiskove-centrum-mz/predstaveni-novely-zakona-o-el-zdravotnictvi-dalsi-projekty/>.

enhanced opportunities for individuals to actively manage their health.² While many eHealth services serve internal healthcare processes, this text focuses on those designed for patients and the general public, including mobile apps, web portals, telemedicine, and electronic access to personal health records. The development of more accessible eHealth services is part of the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, which frames the EU's broader digital transition agenda.³

In Czechia, eHealth services have improved in recent years in efforts to meet the goals of the Digital Decade. However, as described below, further development is still needed in many areas. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly accelerated the rollout of eHealth services in the country.⁴ For instance, digital sick notes (*eNeschopenka*) and electronic information sharing between healthcare providers were introduced, complementing existing electronic prescriptions (*eRecept*).⁵ Today, citizens can also make use of the National Health Information Portal (*Národní zdravotnický informační portál*) and the EZKarta mobile app.⁶ Some digital services are also provided by health insurance companies.⁷

Despite these improvements, many of the available services are still not being used by a significant portion of the Czech population. This is supported by recent

² European Commission, "What is digital health (eHealth)?," Digital health and care, accessed September 10, 2025, https://health.ec.europa.eu/ehealth-digital-health-and-care/digital-health-and-care_en.

³ European Commission, "Digital Decade 2025: eHealth Indicator Study," published June 16, 2025, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-decade-2025-ehealth-indicator-study>.

⁴ Bryndová et al., "Czechia: Health System Review," *Health Systems in Transition* 25, no. 1 (2022): 81, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366529/9789289059336-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁵ Bryndová, "Czechia: Health System Review," 81.

⁶ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán č. 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*, 3, version 1.1. 2021, <https://mzd.gov.cz/finalni-dokument-strategickeho-ramce-rozvoje-pece-o-zdravi-v-ceske-republice-do-roku-2030-a-jeho-implementacni-plan/>. See also National Health Information Portal and EZKarta. Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, NZIP, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://www.nzip.cz/>; Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, EZKarta, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://ncez.mzcr.cz/cs/ezkarta/ezkarta>.

⁷ See for example OZP, Vitakarta, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://www.ozp.cz/ozp#link-vitakarta>; VZP, e-VZP, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://www.vzp.cz/e-vzp>.

data from the Czech Statistical Office, which illustrates some of the persisting shortcomings in the use of eHealth in the country.⁸

2. How the Grey Digital Divide Prevents Access to eHealth

Despite the many benefits that eHealth could offer to older citizens, existing barriers related to the so-called digital divide prevent them from fully accessing these services, placing them at a disadvantage. The digital divide refers to the unequal distribution of ICTs in society, covering both access to and use of these technologies.⁹ It can be observed across multiple different dimensions; in this case, in the uneven access to and use of ICT between younger and older individuals.¹⁰ The divide is shaped by factors such as limited internet access, low digital skills or socioeconomic background.¹¹

As noted above, older people represent one of the socioeconomic groups affected by the digital divide.¹² When referring to this specific group, the term grey digital divide is also used.¹³ Several specific barriers contribute to this divide, with one of them being health condition. According to a Finnish study, health challenges that often come with age can prevent older people from accessing digital technologies.¹⁴ A Spanish study further highlights that physical conditions make it

⁸ For concrete data see ČSÚ, „Zdravotnictví,“ Informační společnost v číslech - 2025, released March 13, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/docs/107508/c4c8f409-889d-7059-c7aa-7c1ba2a39701/06100425g.pdf?version=1.0>.

⁹ Eva Johanna Schweitzer, “Digital divide,” Britannica, last updated August 22, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/digital-divide>.

¹⁰ Schweitzer, “Digital divide”; Ángela Fernández da Silva, Bran Barral Buceta, and Xosé María Mahou-Lago, “eHealth policy in Spain: A comparative study between general population and groups at risk of social exclusion in Spain,” *Digital Health* 8 (2022): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20552076221120724>.

¹¹ Eurofound, *Promoting social cohesion and convergence. Narrowing the digital divide: Economic and social convergence in Europe’s digital transformation* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025), 5, <https://assets.eurofound.europa.eu/f/279033/2fe46af014/ef24009en.pdf>.

¹² Fernández da Silva, “eHealth policy in Spain,” 4.

¹³ Fernández da Silva, “eHealth policy in Spain,” 4; Farooq Mubarak, and Reima Suomi, “Elderly Forgotten? Digital Exclusion in the Information Age and the Rising Grey Digital Divide,” *INGUIRY: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing* 59, (2022): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00469580221096272>.

¹⁴ Mubarak and Suomi, “Digital Exclusion in the Information Age,” 5.

harder to learn digital skills that are necessary to access digital services, creating another layer of exclusion.¹⁵ Although digital skills among older adults will probably improve thanks to generations more familiar with the internet age, the impact of health-related limitations is expected to remain, maintaining the grey digital divide in some form.¹⁶

Barriers are not only physical and technical, but as a recent Eurofound publication warns, the grey digital divide is also influenced by social and cultural aspects. Reduced income after retirement or the loss of close family connections can negatively affect older people's digital inclusion¹⁷ Furthermore, even when individuals have access to devices and a reliable internet connection and possess the necessary skills, they must also be aware of the possibilities digital tools offer them.¹⁸ These layered barriers help explain why many older adults remain digitally disadvantaged or even excluded.¹⁹

A significant number of older people in Czechia might be facing the barriers discussed above. In the country, adults over 65 rank among the groups most digitally excluded or at risk of digital exclusion.²⁰ Even though internet use among older adults is rising in Czechia,²¹ a substantial portion still lacks sufficient access to the internet or does not use digital devices regularly. For example, in 2024,

¹⁵ Fernández da Silva, "eHealth policy in Spain," 11; Ronny König and Alexander Seifert, "From Online to Offline and Vice Versa: Change in Internet Use in Later Life Across Europe," *Frontiers in Sociology* 5, n.4 (2020): 7, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.00004>; WHO, *Equity within digital health technology within the WHO European Region: a scoping review* (Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2022), <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/365326/WHO-EURO-2022-6810-46576-67595-eng.pdf?sequence=1>; Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*, 4.

¹⁶ Mubarak and Suomi, "Digital Exclusion in the Information Age," 5.

¹⁷ Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*, 21.

¹⁸ Eurofound, 2.

¹⁹ Rinku Mohan et al., "Ensuring Sustainable Digital Inclusion among the Elderly: A Comprehensive Analysis," *Sustainability* 16, n. 17 (2024): 5-6, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177485>.

²⁰ Česko.Digital, "Prozkoumali jsme digitální návyky a kompetence digitálně ohrožených a vyloučených lidí," accessed September 17, 2025, <https://www.cesko.digital/projekty/digitalni-inkluzi/home>.

²¹ In 2020, 53.3% people over 65 and 19.7% over 75 were using the internet in Czechia. The number has risen to 71% (people over 65) and 38.7% (people over 75) in 2024. ČSÚ, "Osoby," *Informační společnost v číslech - 2025*, released March 13, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/docs/107508/44b6761c-90f1-3472-d5ef-b2e029b9b4dd/06100425c.pdf?version=1.0>.

36.1% of individuals over 65 were still using basic button mobile phones,²² which are typically incompatible with eHealth mobile apps.

Low usage rates of eHealth services among people over 65 in Czechia are well illustrated by recent data.²³ According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2023, only 8.2% of people aged 65 and older submitted a request for benefits from a health insurance company online, 4.9% arranged a doctor's appointment online, and 2.7% requested an electronic prescription.²⁴ These figures are likely influenced by low digital skills: in 2023, 36.4% of individuals aged 65–74 had low digital skills, and 20.3% had only basic digital skills.²⁵ Moreover, motivation is crucial for digital technologies usage. As a study shows, many Czech seniors facing digital exclusion remain offline due to a combination of barriers: some do not perceive digital technologies as beneficial or relevant to their lives, are reluctant to adopt new elements later in life, or fear that technology may gradually replace personal contact.²⁶

Older adults could benefit greatly from eHealth. For example, they could use online platforms to book medical appointments or report their medical conditions to their healthcare providers.²⁷ In Czechia, people over 65 are at much bigger risk of diseases, are hospitalised more frequently, and consume more medication.²⁸ Because of their regular interaction with the healthcare system, eHealth services could potentially enhance their health.

²² ČSÚ, "Osoby."

²³ See all the concrete data here ČSÚ, "Informační společnost v číslech - 2025," released March 13, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/produkty/informacni-spolecnost-v-cislech-0s2jhpch3i>.

²⁴ ČSÚ, "Zdravotnictví," 6.

²⁵ ČSÚ, "Vzdělávání a digitální dovednosti," Informační společnost v číslech - 2025, released March 13, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/docs/107508/099fe008-21ee-a1bb-0f9c-be142dea1055/06100425f.pdf?version=1.0>.

²⁶ Česko.Digital, "Prozkoumali jsme digitální návyky a kompetence digitálně ohrožených a vyloučených lidí."

²⁷ Mubarak and Suomi, "Digital Exclusion in the Information Age," 3.

²⁸ ČSÚ, "Zdravotní stav," Senioři v datech 2023, March 20, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/seniori-v-datech/zdravotni-stav>. In Czechia, anybody over 65 years old is defined as senior. ČSÚ, "Senioři," accessed September 1, 2025, <https://csu.gov.cz/seniori?pocet=10&start=0&skupiny=31&razeni=-datumVydani>.

However, many older people remain excluded from these benefits. For instance, some Czech health insurance companies offer dental hygiene reimbursement only when the request is processed online,²⁹ which disadvantages older people facing the above-mentioned digital barriers. As Czech society ages and the share of people over 65 increases, this need is even more pressing.³⁰ Improving eHealth access for this group would also benefit society at large. As health insurance companies generally spend more on the treatment of seniors compared with younger individuals, enabling them to manage their health more effectively could contribute to more efficient use of public healthcare resources.³¹ However, the grey digital divide and the barriers it stems from prevent older adults in Czechia from accessing eHealth and consequently benefit from its services. Since these services aim to provide citizens with easier health management and control over personal health information,³² exclusion from eHealth may ultimately lead to poorer health outcomes for older people in Czechia.

3. Czechia's Low Performance in eHealth Inclusion Negatively Affects Older People

Within the EU, the development of eHealth services represents one of the targets of the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030.³³ Member States' performance in eHealth is measured by the eHealth Indicator, which comprises 12 sub-

²⁹ To get dental hygiene reimbursed by the VZP insurance company, individuals must apply online. Digitální svobody, "Abeceda digitálního vylučování," last update January 28, 2025, <https://digitalnisvobody.cz/abeceda-digitalniho-vylucovani/>.

³⁰ Statistika a my, "Nová digitální publikace ČSÚ přináší ucelený pohled na seniory," March 20, 2025, <https://statistikaamy.csu.gov.cz/nova-digitalni-publikace-csu-prinasi-uceleny-pohled-na-seniory>.

³¹ ČSÚ, "Zdravotní stav."

³² Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Health 2030: The Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care in Czechia until 2030* (Last update 2020), <https://mzd.gov.cz/finalni-dokument-strategickeho-ramce-rozvoje-pece-o-zdravi-v-ceske-republice-do-roku-2030-a-jeho-implementacni-planu/>; Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán č. 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*.

³³ European Commission, "eHealth Indicator Study," Digital Decade 2025, June 16, 2025, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-decade-2025-ehealth-indicator-study>.

indicators.³⁴ The Digital Decade sets a target for 100% of EU citizens to have access to their electronic health records, which is the main focus of EU-level efforts in eHealth.³⁵ Specific sub-indicators then track states' performance in areas like health data accessibility, data providers, modes of access or access requirements.³⁶ To reach the target of the Digital Decade, the European Health Data Space (EHDS) Regulation entered into force in March 2025. It establishes a unified framework for the use and exchange of electronic health data in Member States and across their borders, aiming to facilitate both primary (treatment) and secondary (research, policy) use of health data.³⁷

Czechia has shown a significant improvement since the previous eHealth Indicator Study. According to the recent eHealth Indicator Study, published in 2025, Czechia's overall eHealth maturity score was 77% in 2024, up from 51% in 2023. For comparison, the European average was 83% in 2024³⁸ In this Study, Czechia's status improved from 'beginner' to 'follower'.³⁹ Despite this progress, significant gaps remain in patient access to health data. While a centralised national access service exists, Czechia provides no patient access to electronic results and reports. Access to other categories of individual health information remains limited, with Czechia scoring well below the EU average.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the overall access to online eHealth services has risen significantly since 2023. In 2024, 40–59% of the

³⁴ European Commission, "eHealth Indicator Study."

³⁵ European Commission.

³⁶ European Commission.

³⁷ European Commission, "European Health Data Space Regulation (EHDS)," accessed September 25, 2025, https://health.ec.europa.eu/ehealth-digital-health-and-care/european-health-data-space-regulation-ehds_en.

³⁸ Martin Page and Puck de Waal, *2025 Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study - Country factsheets* (LUX: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5bcdd3b7-4740-11f0-85ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

³⁹ Page and de Waal, *2025 Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study*.

⁴⁰ Page and de Waal.

population was technically able to access at least some available online services related to eHealth records.⁴¹

Importantly, in 2024, Czechia implemented provisions allowing legal guardians and authorised persons to access electronic health records on behalf of others.⁴² However, a legal framework specifically guaranteeing more specific support for disadvantaged people in accessing eHealth records is still missing.⁴³ In the coming years, Czechia will also need to focus on the implementation of the EHDS Regulation, a process which is expected to take approximately six years, according to expert estimates.⁴⁴

Older adults in Czechia could benefit from electronic access to their health records as well. As emphasized in the eHealth Indicator Study published in 2024, full access to health records can make it easier for them to manage their health and increase their autonomy.⁴⁵ However, as explained above, older people cannot often take full advantage of these benefits. This is further compounded by the fact that not all types of health data are available in Czechia. Moreover, even when access exists, this is usually provided through mobile apps and online portals which require an electronic ID (e-ID) to log in.⁴⁶ However, only a small percentage of older people in Czechia use e-ID systems,⁴⁷ which creates an additional barrier.

⁴¹ Page and de Waal. It was only 19% in 2023, see the study from 2024 European Commission, "eHealth Indicator Study," Digital Decade 2024, July 2, 2024, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/digital-decade-2024-ehealth-indicator-study>.

⁴² Page and de Waal, 2025 *Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study*.

⁴³ Page and de Waal.

⁴⁴ Ministr Zdraví, "Výsledky zdravotních vyšetření bez čekání a na jedno kliknutí: přichází revoluce v digitalizaci, Česko na ni zatím není připravené," March 10, 2025, <https://www.ministrzdravi.cz/aktualita/vysledky-zdravotnich-vysetreni-bez-cekani-a-na-jedno-kliknuti-prichazi-revoluce-v-digitalizaci-cesko-na-ni-zatim-neni-pripravene/>.

⁴⁵ Martin Page et al., 2024 *Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study Executive Summary* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024), 5, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/74ab99ab-381b-11ef-b441-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

⁴⁶ Page and de Waal, 2025 *Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study*.

⁴⁷ ČSÚ, "Veřejná správa a digitální technologie."

The digitisation of healthcare services in Czechia, was significantly advanced by the 2021 adoption of the Act on eHealth.⁴⁸ In 2025, an amendment to the Act was passed and will come into force next year.⁴⁹ It should bring significant improvements to citizens' access to health information. Key innovations include the introduction of centralised electronic booking for medical appointments and a portal where patients will find all their health information in one place.⁵⁰ Alongside this amendment, *eŽádanka* (a system where patients can see their electronic medical examination bookings and requests) and the new portal *Očkoreport* will be introduced.⁵¹ Importantly, the Act and the amendment provide for a 'third-party' access mechanism, under which a patient may authorise a legal representative to access their health records.⁵² This measure helps mitigate the risk of exclusion and offers a partial workaround for older adults who are unable to access services digitally on their own.

Only limited attention is dedicated to older adults' access to eHealth services in Czech strategies on eHealth and ageing.⁵³ In 2019, the strategic framework Health 2030 (*Zdraví 2030*) was released, and concrete goals for healthcare digitalisation are provided in the accompanying implementation plan on digitalisation.⁵⁴ However, neither the framework nor the implementation plan goes into detail regarding excluded and at-risk-of-exclusion groups, including older people.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán č. 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*, 9; Ministerstvo vnitra, "Sbírka zákonů."

⁴⁹ *Zákony pro lidi*, "Zákon č. 236/2025 Sb.," accessed September 10, 2025, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2025-236>; Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, "Ministerstvo zdravotnictví představilo novelu zákona o elektronizaci zdravotnictví."

⁵⁰ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví.

⁵¹ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví.

⁵² See both the Act on eHealth and its amendment adopted in 2025.

⁵³ See the Strategic Framework Health 2030, Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Health 2030*. And the Strategy on ageing, Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí, "Strategický rámec přípravy na stárnutí společnosti 2021-2025," last version October 19, 2021, <https://www.mpsv.cz/strategicky-ramec-pripravy-na-starnuti-spolecnosti-2021-2025>.

⁵⁴ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán číslo 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*. Later, Health 2030 and its corresponding digitalisation strategy were updated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Bryndová, "Czechia: Health System Review," 21.

⁵⁵ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Health 2030*; Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán číslo 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*.

Although the implementation plan stresses that accessibility for citizens is essential, it offers only a few specific measures and goals on how to achieve this. According to the plan, the implementation of new technologies should be done thoughtfully to prevent harming patients and eHealth should enhance individuals' ability to take care of their own health, which, however, presupposes that citizens have access to it.⁵⁶ Similarly, the Strategic Framework for the Preparation for Social Ageing 2021–2025 (*Strategický rámec přípravy na stárnutí společnosti*) does not sufficiently focus on the issue of digital exclusion among older adults.⁵⁷ However, a new strategy for the upcoming years should be released soon, as 2026 approaches.

4. Recommendations for eHealth Services That Work for Older People

To ensure that older people are not excluded by healthcare digitalisation, their needs must be recognised and addressed by policymakers, concretely by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which hold primary responsibility for the relevant strategies and frameworks. Multiple recommendations have been made before by various organisations.

First, as the Eurofound report suggests, policymakers should commit to the do-no-harm principle when implementing eHealth services. They should keep older people in mind while navigating the transition and ensure they are not excluded from accessing healthcare as a result. To achieve this, analogue options should remain for certain services to help digitally excluded older adults.⁵⁸ For instance,

⁵⁶ Ministerstvo zdravotnictví, *Zdraví 2030, Implementační plán číslo 2.3 Digitalizace zdravotnictví*.

⁵⁷ Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí, "Strategický rámec přípravy na stárnutí společnosti 2021-2025." By September 2025, a more recent framework had not been made available yet.

⁵⁸ Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*.

appointment bookings should stay available via phone calls to ensure excluded adults will get the chance to arrange them.

Second, as Česko.Digital emphasises, assistance should be provided to people who wish to benefit from eHealth but do not have the necessary skills or awareness of its possibilities. Assistance materials should be adjusted to older people's specific health conditions and presented simply, to ensure they are understandable. Importantly, those who wish to remain offline should be respected and not forced into technologies usage.⁵⁹ Support with technology use should be guaranteed by the state and executed by state initiatives or (state-supported) NGOs. Existing initiatives helping older adults with digital technologies such as Wise Owl (*Moudrá sovička*) and Digital Odyssey (*Digitální Odyssea*) should be further supported in their activities by the state.⁶⁰

Third, strategies covering digital skills education should emphasise an in-person approach, to help overcome the offline barrier and reach excluded older adults.⁶¹ A good example are public libraries, which can serve as an orientation and assistance point, often providing training sessions or workshops.⁶² In Czechia, public libraries are already well established and offer also workshops specifically focused on improving digital skills among older adults.⁶³ This practice should be further maintained and actively supported by the state government and relevant ministries.

⁵⁹ Česko.Digital, "Prozkoumali jsme digitální návyky a kompetence digitálně ohrožených a vyloučených lidí."

⁶⁰ Chrysanthi Katrini et al eds., *For the digital inclusion of older persons: a "digital rights" approach*, best practice report (St@ndByMe, 2024), 21-22, <https://www.apsscr.cz/media/sluzby/projekty/st-at-ndbyme/digital-human-rights-best-practices-single-page.pdf>. See initiatives here: Moudrá sovička, "O nás," accessed November 16, 2025, <https://www.moudrasovicka.cz/o-nas/>; Digitální Odyssea, "O projektu," Nadace Vodafone, accessed November 16, 2025, <https://odysea.nadacevodafone.cz/>.

⁶¹ Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*, 68. For a recommendations on improving digital skills see Digitální Česko, *The Path to Europe's Digital Decade: The Strategic Plan for the Digitalization of Czechia by 2030* (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, last updated 2023), https://digitalnicesko.gov.cz/media/files/The_Path_to_Europes_Digital_Decade_The_Strategic_Plan_for_the_Digitalization_of_Czechia_by_2030_oOROu6I.pdf.

⁶² Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*, 64.

⁶³ Katrini et al, *For the digital inclusion of older persons*, 21-22.

To increase the reach of these efforts, particularly in more distant rural areas, inspiration can be drawn from Estonia, where mobile libraries have proven to be an effective tool.⁶⁴ Trainings on digital skills should emphasise learning-to-learn competencies, not only tool-specific instruction, to support lasting inclusion.⁶⁵

Finally, if an easy access to eHealth services for older people is not secured in the official strategies, and if sufficient measures are not prepared and taken in practice afterwards, this may prevent older adults from fully benefitting from eHealth. Therefore, there should be more space dedicated to this issue in the strategies. These strategies should recognise the specific challenges faced by older adults when accessing eHealth services, such as lower digital skills or lack of motivation.

Conclusion

This analysis shows that a grey digital divide is present in Czechia. It results in the digital exclusion of older people and subsequently limits their access to eHealth services, preventing them from benefitting fully. In the coming years, Czechia will have to adjust its current eHealth services to respond to the newly adopted EHDS Regulation.⁶⁶ Greater effort will also be necessary to meet the Digital Decade official targets in eHealth. In this regard, inspiration can be drawn from Poland, which already ranks as a trendsetter in eHealth, with 80–100% of its population technically able to access online services for eHealth records.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Katrini et al, 12-13.

⁶⁵ Eurofound, *Narrowing the digital divide*, 68.

⁶⁶ Ministr zdraví, “Evropský prostor pro zdravotní data je tu. O co v EHDS jde a jaký má harmonogram?” April 2, 2024, <https://www.ministrzdravi.cz/aktualita/evropsky-prostor-pro-zdravotni-data-je-tu-o-co-v-ehds-jde-a-jaky-ma-harmonogram/>.

⁶⁷ Page and de Waal, *2025 Digital Decade eHealth Indicator Study*, 85. Conversely, the basic digital skills among the Polish population remain low.

Tackling the grey digital divide should be more comprehensively addressed in Czech government frameworks and strategies, where the specific needs of older people are insufficiently covered.

If eHealth is not designed and implemented carefully, it risks excluding older people rather than benefitting them,⁶⁸ contradicting the EU's digital rights and inclusion principles.⁶⁹ Poorly adapted digital healthcare services could create new inequalities.⁷⁰ It is crucial for policymakers to remember that citizens should be at the centre of the digital transition and that technologies should serve their needs.⁷¹ The digital transition must leave no one behind, older people included.

⁶⁸ Fernández da Silva, "eHealth policy in Spain," 2.

⁶⁹ See the EU principles here European Commission, "Digital Inclusion," accessed September 25, 2025, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-inclusion>.

⁷⁰ Fernández da Silva, "eHealth policy in Spain," 2.

⁷¹ Evropský Parlament, Rada a Komise, *Evropské prohlášení o digitálních právech a zásadách pro digitální dekádu*, 2023/C 23/03, Úřední věstník EU (2023), [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023C0123\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023C0123(01)).

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