

SKILLS+

Interreg Europe

Supporting knowledge capacity in ICT among SME
to engage in growth and innovation

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS AND REGIONS

Ministry for Regional Development and Transport of SaxonyAnhalt, GERMANY

Kainuun Etu Ltd., FINLAND

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of LATVIA

University of Western Macedonia, GREECE

Malopolska Regional Development Agency, POLAND

Trøndelag County Authority, NORWAY

Zadar County Rural Development Agency, CROATIA

Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, BULGARIA

Ministry for Culture and Tourism of Castilla y León Regional Government, SPAIN

Pannon Novum WestTransdanubian Regional Innovation Nonprofit Ltd., HUNGARY

University of LATVIA

Technical University of Ostrava, CZECH REPUBLIC

SKILLS+ aims at advancing public policies promoting information and communication technologies (ICT) skills among SMEs in rural areas helping them seize fully the opportunities offered by a digital single market and benefits of a digital economy.

The project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and Norwegian national funding through the INTERREG EUROPE programme. The project involves 12 partners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Poland and Spain.

www.interregeurope.eu/skillsplus

European Union Programme Interreg Europe

Specific objective: Improving SMEs competitiveness policies

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:



01/04/2016 - 31/03/2019



01/04/2019 - 31/03/2021

PROJECT TERRITORY:



13 million inhabitants



Territory: ~317 m²

PROJECT TARGETS



More SMEs in rural areas using ICT tools in their daily activities.



More new products and services developed and introduced by SMEs in rural areas.



More SMEs digitalisation initiatives.

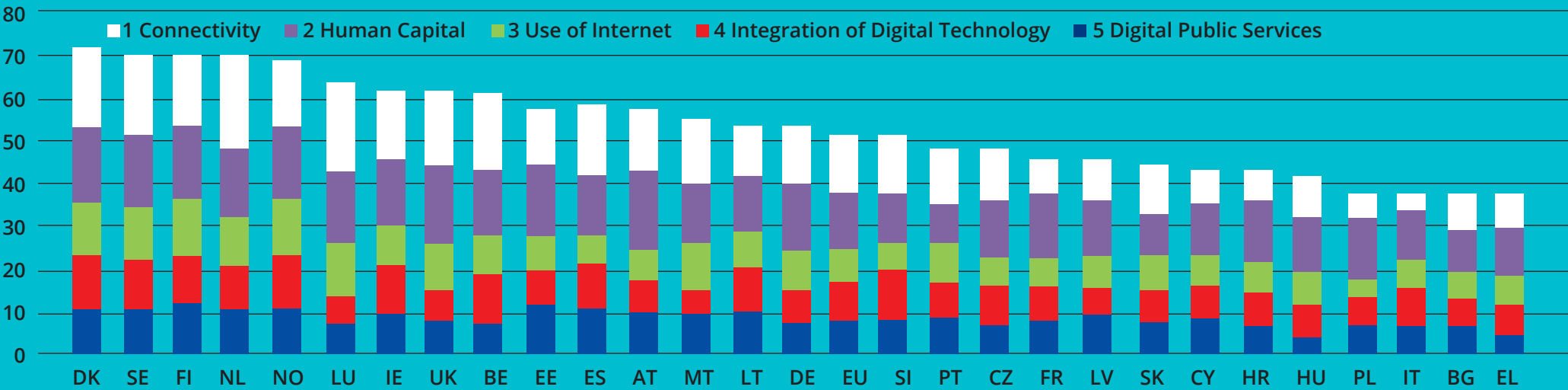


More funding absorbed by rural SMEs for introducing innovative ICT solutions.

DIGITALISATION PROGRESS ACCORDING TO DESI 2018 RANKING

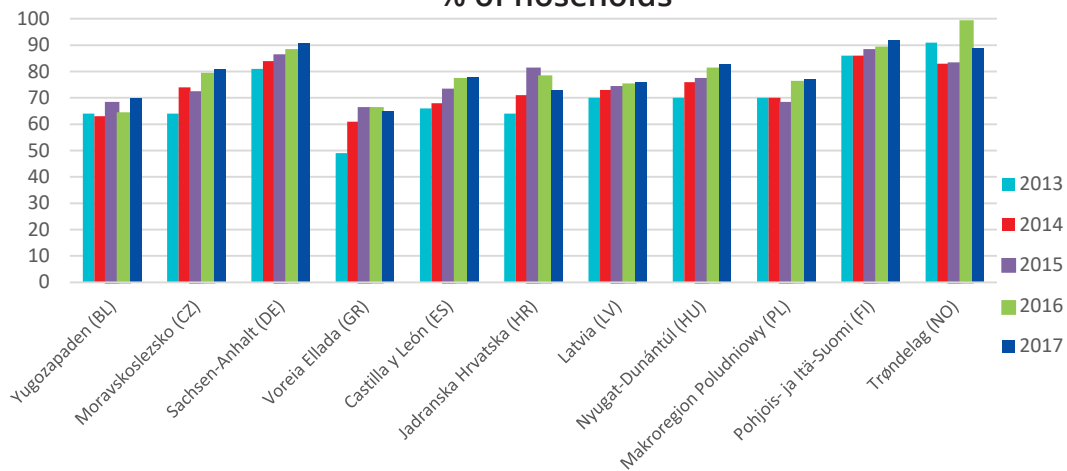
Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2018 ranking

SOURCE: European Commission, Digital Scoreboard, 2018

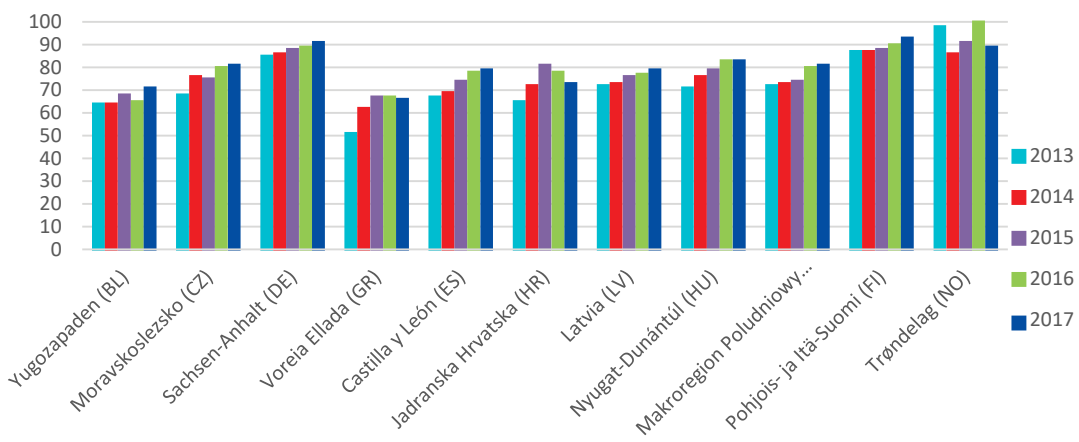


CONNECTIVITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVED, BUT IS STILL INSUFFICIENT IN RURAL AND HARD TO REACH AREAS

Households with broadband access, % of households

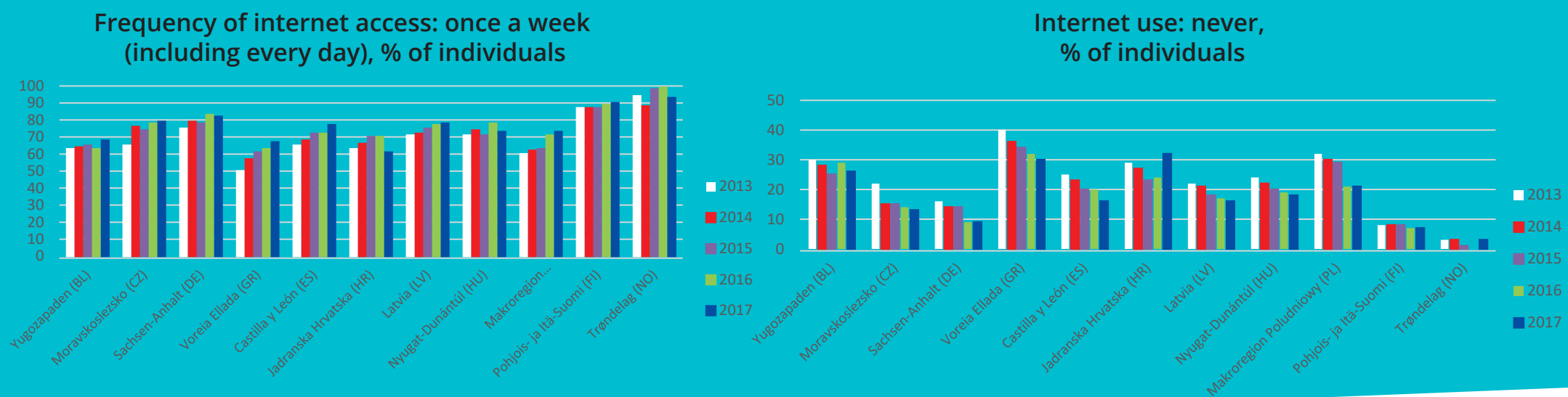


Households with access to the internet at home, % of households

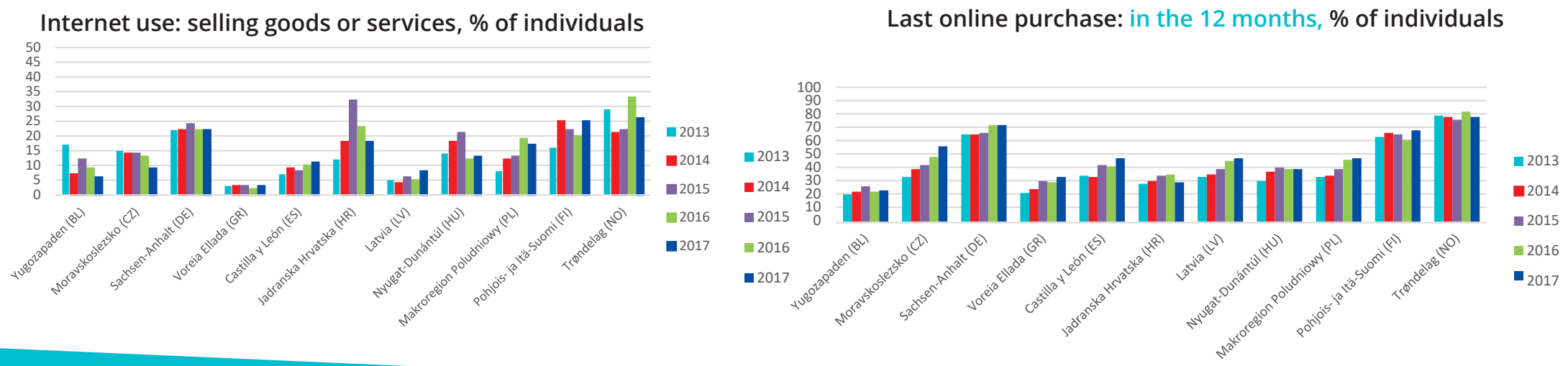


SOURCE: Eurostat, 2018

SOCIETIES AND SMES ARE GRADUALLY BECOMING MORE DIGITAL BUT THERE ARE STILL MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER USED INTERNET.



REGIONS HAVE MORE DIGITAL BUSINESSES WHILE E-COMMERCE IS GROWING BUT TOO SLOWLY.



PEOPLE INTERACT MORE WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES ON-LINE AND USE INTERNET BANKING MORE BUT STILL REMAIN LARGE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REGIONS, AS WELL AS BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS.



COMMON CHALLENGES

Development of broadband and internet access in rural, distant and hard to reach areas

Readiness of enterprises and governmental organizations to adapt to rapidly changing digital environment and global trends

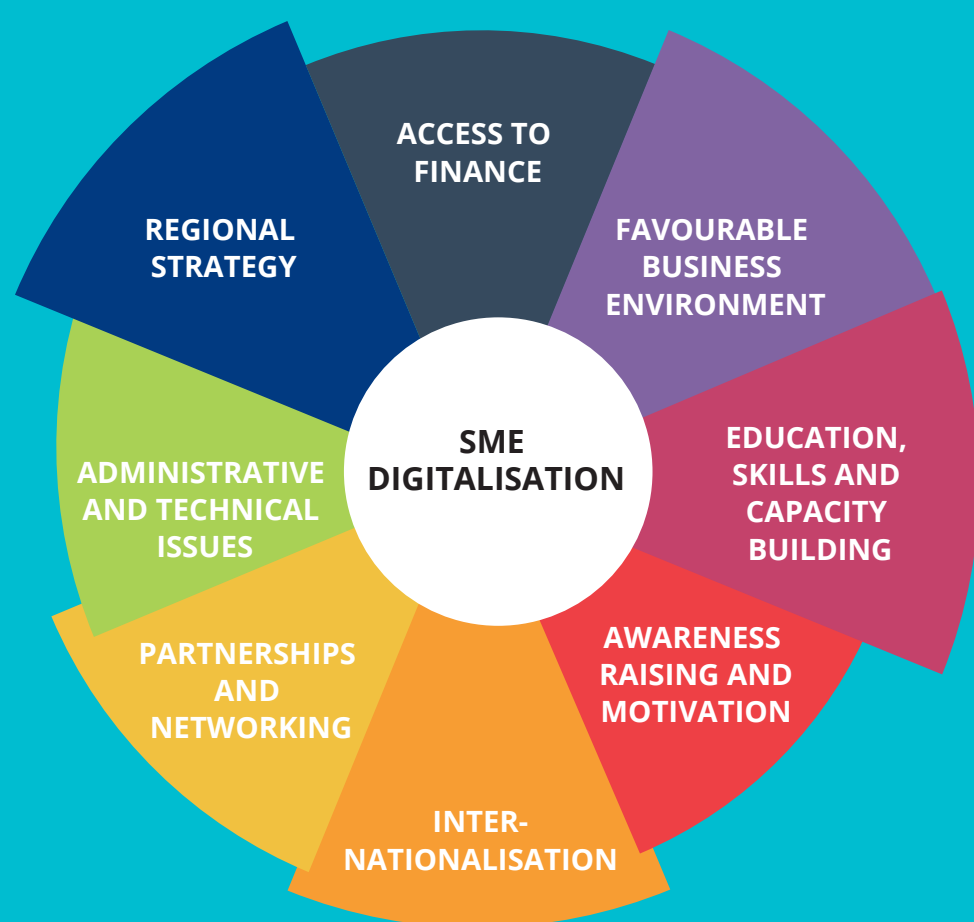
Demographic challenges related to aging population and emigration

Accessibility of skills and knowledge using ICT and digital tools

Accessibility of financing for continuous development of infrastructure and technological upgrade

Cyber security

FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING SMES DIGITALISATION



PROJECT RESULTS:

- **11** action plans to promote SME digitalisation in rural areas
- **12** institutions from 10 EU member states and Norway working together
- **80** stakeholders involved
- Over **16 million Euro** to be invested
- More than **5000** businesses expected to benefit from implemented actions directly and many more from the spillover effect

DIGITALISATION STRENGTHENS COMPETITIVENESS OF COMPANIES AND REGIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.** Take use of good practices collected by SKILLS+ and other projects or networks. If necessary, the approaches should be adapted to better suit local conditions.
- 2.** Doing business is getting more and more digitalised. Especially very small companies must be made aware of the opportunities for their business activities.
- 3.** Adopt digitalisation strategies on national and regional levels. Encourage enterprises to adopt their individual digitalisation strategies.
- 4.** Introduce new digital solutions and tools to SMEs and show, how these solutions could free-up resources and reduce costs providing additional resources for investing in modernization.
- 5.** Parallel to infrastructure improvements introduce the most required non-monetary support measures, such as seminars, training, consultations, one stop shops and help-desks. Simplification of digital application and affordable, suitable and in some cases tailor made digital solutions and products for SMEs in rural areas are also required.
- 6.** Ensure that adequate financing is available to assist companies or business support associations in their digitalisation efforts.
- 7.** Teach the teachers and make sure that trainings offered to companies is certified.
- 8.** Reduce unnecessary regulations and bureaucratic procedures without jeopardising online safety.
- 9.** Build on business support networks and platforms for university-to-business cooperation to promote digitalisation.



Higher revenue



Higher market assessment



Increase of company value