



## Rural schools boosting digital skills

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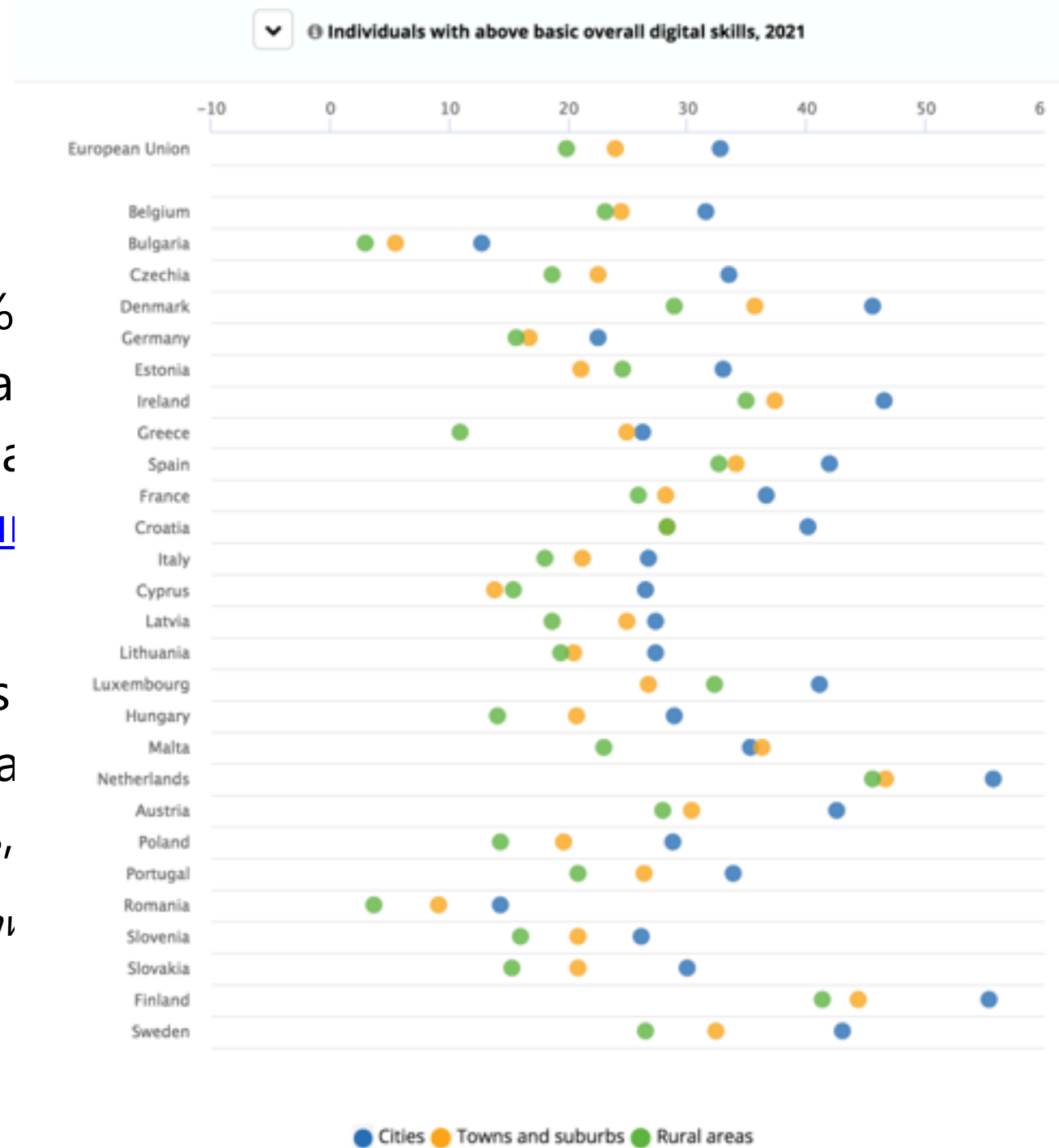
# EU digital skills divide

In 2021, just over one quarter (26% reported above-basic overall digital skills people living in [cities](#) (33%), while a [towns and suburbs](#) (24%) and in [rural](#) digital skills.

The overall digital skills indicator is of skills: information and data literacy skills, digital content creation skills,

*Individuals' level of digital skills (from 2021 onwards)*

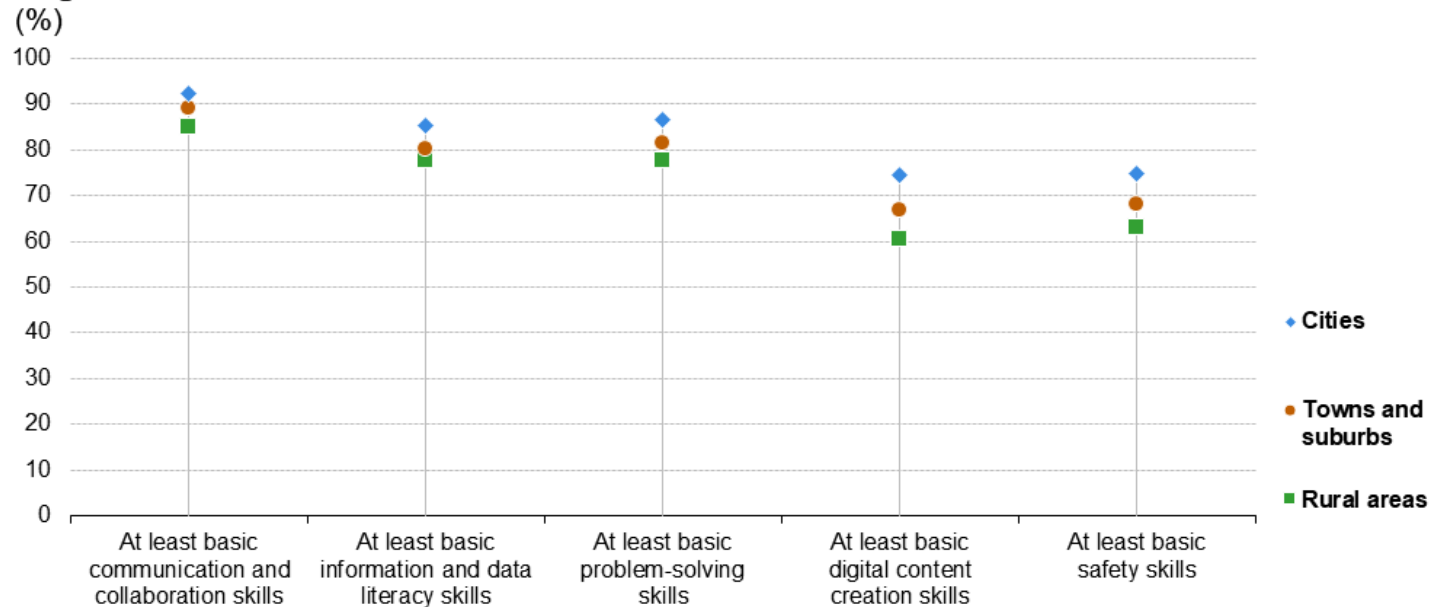
*Source of data: Eurostat*



# EU digital skills divide

- In 2023, almost 9 out of 10 (89.3%) of the EU population aged 16–74 years had at least basic digital communication and collaboration skills. A higher share was recorded for people living in cities (92.2%), while those living in rural areas had a lower share (85.1%). This pattern – a higher share of people living in cities having at least basic digital skills – was repeated for all 5 areas covered by the composite indicator, with the largest digital divide recorded for content creation skills, where there was a 13.8 percentage point gap in the share of people with at least basic skills between those living in cities (74.4%) and those living in rural areas (60.6%).

**Individuals (age group 16–74) with at least basic digital skills, by degree of urbanisation, EU, 2023**



Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc\_sk\_dskl\_i21)

# Challenges in Rural Education

- ▶ Digital divide, funding issues, lack of equipment, connectivity problems, hindering access to online resources and educational opportunities for students in remote areas.
- ▶ Students in rural areas tend to have lower socio-economic status, higher truancy rates, lower academic achievement, and decreased likelihood of accessing higher education.
- ▶ Teacher shortages in rural schools due to remoteness, isolation, and limited career opportunities lead to fewer networking and professional development opportunities.
- ▶ Disparities in educational quality between rural and urban areas create obstacles for equal educational opportunities.

# Learning from the Extremes

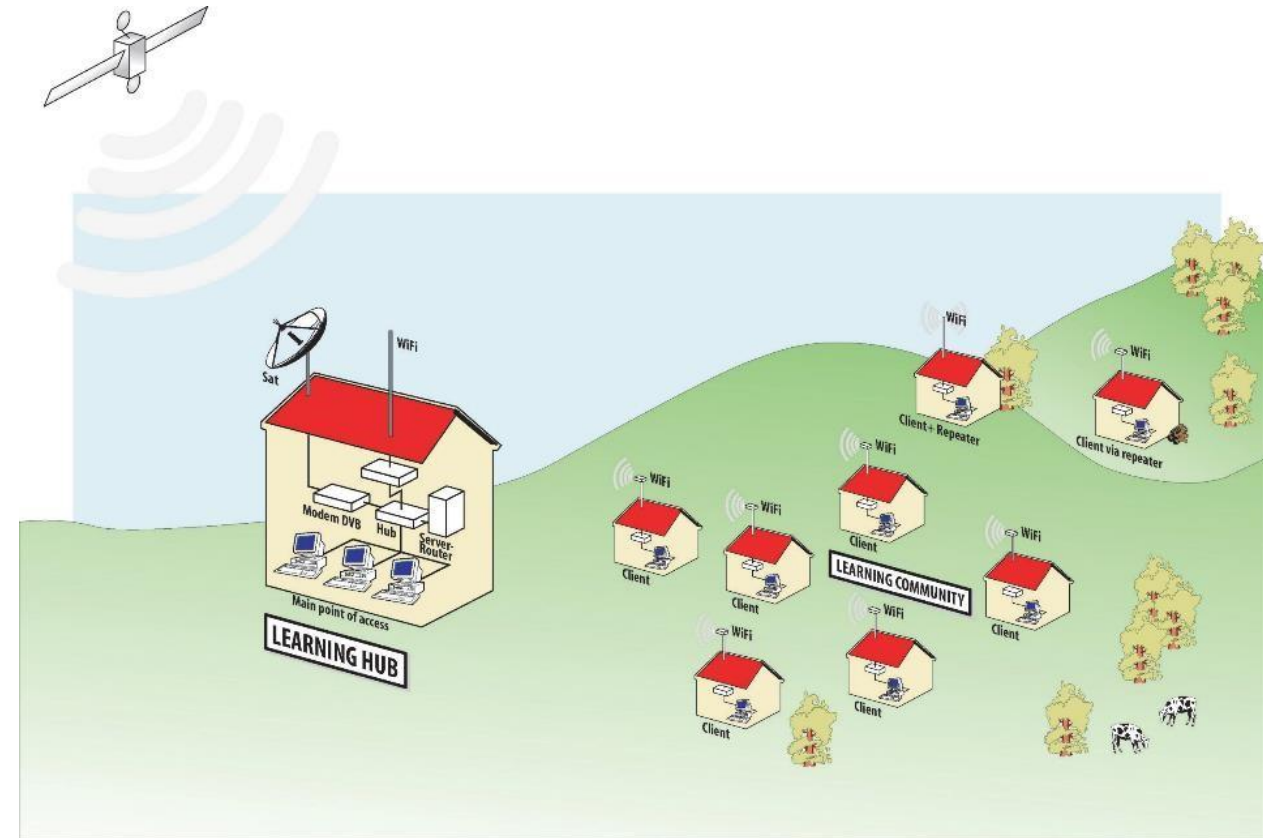
- ▶ This Preparatory Action was focusing on fostering innovation in rural schools and aimed at addressing inequalities of access to digital education by enhancing inclusion and by reducing the digital gap suffered by school communities from rural areas.
- ▶ The project has equipped with digital tools, applications and has improved the connectivity channels of 123 rural schools in 10 EU countries and then has monitored and assessed the openness of these schools in comparison with their e-maturity levels.
- ▶ The data from the schools demonstrated significant growth in innovation (almost 20% on average) while the growth is much higher for less advanced schools (goes up to 35%) in a one-year intervention. At the same time the key finding was that the deployment of ICTs in these environments must be accompanied with systematic and methodological training for the teachers involved.



# Rural Wings Academy. Our vision

## The School as Learning Hub of the Rural Community

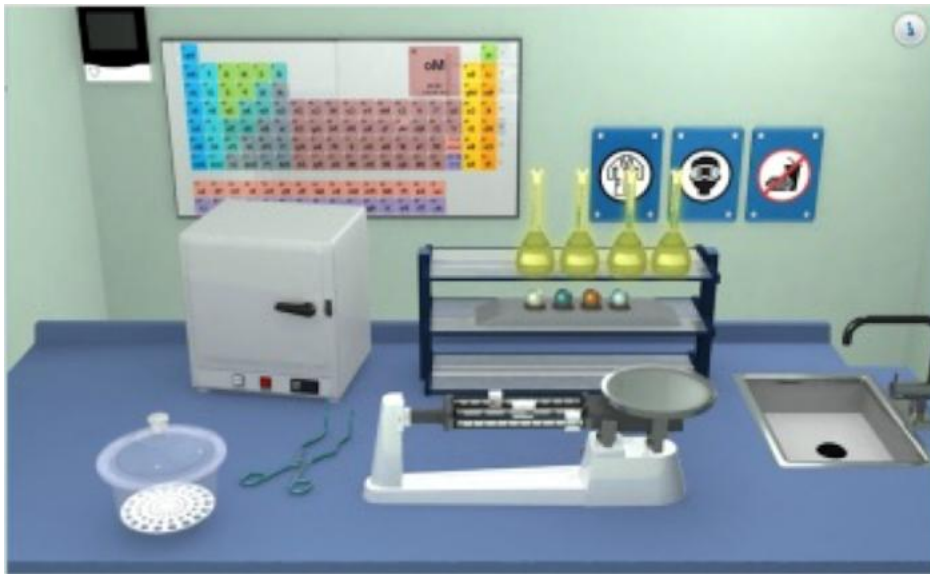
- ▶ Introduces innovation in the classroom
- ▶ Fosters (digital) skills
- ▶ Creates an attractive environment for all
- ▶ Facilitates inclusion
- ▶ Effectively engages families, local communities, industry, experts, universities, research institutions, museums
- ▶ "Sees" itself as an ecosystem of (digital) innovation.





# Digital skills in education

► High-speed connectivity offers unique learning experiences to students by providing access to remote or virtual labs when such infrastructure is not available in the school environment or by bringing to life phenomena described in the schoolbooks. Students in rural areas can be supported by remote and virtual tutors when teachers of specific subjects (e.g., music) are missing. Students and schools can be supported to act as information hub for their community and collaborate with other schools and organisations (seismograph, network of schools).





# Thank you!

**Join the Rural Pact Community and online platform**

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