



Communications and Digital Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Digital exclusion and the cost of living

Tuesday 14 March 2023

3.20 pm

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Baroness Stowell of Beeston (The Chair); Lord Foster of Bath; Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie; Lord Hall of Birkenhead; Baroness Harding of Winscombe; Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill; Lord Kamall; Lord Lipsey; Baroness Wheatcroft.

Evidence Session No. 6

Heard in Public

Questions 54 - 58

Witnesses

[I](#): Kristina Reinsalu, Programme Director of e-Democracy, e-Governance Academy, Estonia; Róbert Bjarnason, President, Citizens Foundation Iceland; Professor Ellen Helsper, Professor of Digital Inequalities, London School of Economics and Political Science.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Kristina Reinsalu, Róbert Bjarnason and Professor Ellen Helsper.

Q54 **The Chair:** I am very pleased to be joined by three witnesses, one of whom is here in the room, with two joining us online. In a moment, I will ask you to introduce yourselves briefly.

In our previous panel, we looked at what is happening in the different nations of the United Kingdom. We are now looking overseas to see what we can learn from other countries that have been successful in their approach to digital inclusion. We look to Professor Helsper for an overview of how the UK stacks up against everybody else.

I will start with our online witnesses. Please say the country that you are here to talk to us about and any organisation that you represent.

Kristina Reinsalu: I am from Estonia. I am head of the e-democracy programme at the e-Governance Academy in Estonia, a non-governmental organisation. Our main mission is to support government, local government and civil society organisations in implementing technologies to improve the interaction between citizens and different stakeholders, and support government on cybersecurity, e-democracy and smart technologies, et cetera.

Róbert Bjarnason: I am from Iceland. I am the CEO of Citizens Foundation, a non-profit foundation started in 2008. Our purpose is to help Governments to connect to citizens online to help to improve decision-making. We work with many organisations—for example, the city of Reykjavik, close to 20 municipalities in Iceland and the Scottish Parliament on its engagement platform. We have worked with the National Lottery Community Fund in the UK and many others. My background is that I started the first internet company in Iceland in 1993, connecting people to the internet.

The Chair: I thank all three of you for joining us today. We are conscious of time, because we expect Divisions in Parliament that could disrupt proceedings. I will hand over straightaway to my colleague Lord Kamall, who will direct his question to just one of you. We will then open it up as we go along.

Q55 **Lord Kamall:** I will start with Professor Helsper, but I am interested in Ms Reinsalu's and Mr Bjarnason's perspectives. Is there a clear measure of digital exclusion and inclusion? Having got that definition, is there a way of comparing the UK with other countries? How do we compare?

Professor Ellen Helsper: I will also give a brief introduction—

The Chair: I do beg your pardon. Sorry.

Professor Ellen Helsper:—just to put this into context, as it explains where I come from in answering that question. I work in the media and communications department of the London School of Economics and Political Science and at the International Inequalities Institute. My official

title is professor of socio-digital inequalities. That is important in answering this question.

I have worked with many international organisations such as the International Telecommunication Union, the UN, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Health Organization on issues relating to digital inclusion, in particular on digital inequalities. Those are two different things.

A lot of work has gone into measures of digital inclusion. I was here during the previous session and, as you implied, the starting point is a good definition. There are good measurements of aspects of access and use in terms of how they are defined—for example, somebody has used the internet in the last six months. International statistics offices tend to collect that data, which gets fed into the instrument by the International Telecommunication Union. There are statistics available on that.

However, in our work, especially when we start talking about inequalities that might prevent countries from getting ahead in increasingly digital societies, digital inclusion is much broader than that. We have already heard mention of skills. In the kinds of indicators that I will talk about in a minute, it is important to understand that it is not just about technical skills, such as programming and being able to manipulate devices, which we might call operational skills.

Increasingly, we are seeing the importance of what some call soft skills but which we might want to call critical or creative, rather than passive-use, skills—being able not just to use the technology in the way it is designed but to create content and shape the digital world in a way that brings benefits to oneself and others.

Skills are an important element. A lot of work is going on at the moment. For example, Eurostat and DigComp—the Digital Competences Framework—just saw a major revamp of this where there is a much more comprehensive view. For Europe, we have relatively good indicators. There is now a common framework, which is also important.

There is then what we might call the third level of inclusion or inequalities, which is related to the differences in how we might use the technology and the outcomes that we get from that use: the benefits we obtain and the more negative experiences, or the ways in which digitisation might affect us negatively.

There is still quite a lot of work to do there, to be honest. It is about what content is needed and in which format. In talking about access, you have infrastructure and devices but you also have whether content is available in a way that makes sense to people and addresses their needs.

I am very glad to see my Estonian and Icelandic colleagues here. There is a lot of work going on here, but there is no universal indicator for this. We know from the REMEDIS—REthinking MEdia literacy and DIgital Skills—project that we are working on at the moment that there are even less clear frameworks and measurement of the outcomes of interventions and government policies.

We might think about how different types of interventions work that emphasise a more targeted group or spaces and locations for local community outcomes. That is being developed at the moment, but there is much less international agreement on what these focus areas are. We have more formal instrumental outcomes for jobs or educational achievement. There are some indicators for that, but there is much less on well-being, participation or the things that keep a society going cohesively and beneficially.

Lord Kamall: Having said all that, could you give us the news—good or bad—about how well the UK compares to other countries?

Professor Ellen Helsper: Here I want to come to inclusion versus inequality. On inclusion, especially when we talk about use—has somebody used it, using whatever device?—the UK does not do that badly globally. If you take the world internet stats fed into by national statistics offices, the UK is maybe around No. 20 if you take out some of the smaller island nations that connect only five people, or countries that have more internet users than people living in the country. The UK is around that level, which is not too bad.

On the more technical skills, the UK, based on Eurostat measures, is about half way up the ranking when it comes to which country has higher levels of skills that allow us to participate in various ways, but it has to be said that that is still only 50% of the skills one might think are needed at a reasonable level. It is midway up the table, but that is not necessarily good news.

As I said, I would not want to make a statement on use and outcomes. However, on inequalities, when it comes to the differences between people from different backgrounds, the UK tends to do worse. There tend to be bigger differences between people with higher levels of education and those with lower levels, between people who live in poverty and those who do not, between people with health problems and those without, and in the broad scope of inequalities that we might measure—from the more economic to the more sociocultural well-being. There, the UK does not tend to do that well, even though overall, especially when we look at basic access, the UK does quite well.

Lord Kamall: We are limited for time, so will you submit some further answers to that in writing? I am told I do not have enough time to go to the other witnesses, so I will let my colleagues put their questions to them.

The Chair: I am sure that in response to the questions that follow you will want to touch on measurement when it comes to what is going on in your own countries anyway.

Q56 Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill: Estonia and Iceland have remarkable records, about which this committee is very interested. What were the motivating forces in your two countries behind the digital transformation programmes? For example, was it to do with boosting innovation or social equality, or a combination of those? I am very interested in your digital ID card. Was that the fundamental that allowed

you both to start this process?

Kristina Reinsalu: It is my pleasure to share some Estonian experiences. Obviously, I listened carefully to Professor Helsper. Our trajectory has been quite different, because we started our digital story or transformation from zero almost 30 years ago. It is probably a bit easier to start from scratch in building a secure, inclusive and transparent state, as we wanted. Technology was already available, so that was pretty much the high motivation to bring us to where we are.

It was mostly the combination of boosting innovation and paying attention at the same time to social equalities, but it started from the very clear understanding that, coming from Soviet occupation, if we wanted to catch up with the rest of the world we needed to do something differently.

At the same time, we did not have any resources. That was a good driver for any kind of innovation. When you do not have resources, you need to do something differently. Technology was there and was seen as key. We wanted to use all the opportunities there. That was the high-level motivation.

There was a surprisingly big consensus in society on investing in technology: that we would suffer now, knowing it would bring fruit in future. At the same time, strategically, an important first decision was to pay attention to ensuring that nobody was left behind. That social equality dimension was there pretty much from the beginning. The first nationwide public-private partnerships were about computerising all schools to start digital literacy, with teachers and kids having free access. Again, 30 years ago, Estonia started as a very poor country, but a big proportion of available budget was invested in technology. That is how it started. Many cultural factors were involved.

Róbert Bjarnason: In recent rankings of internet penetration, Iceland is at 99%. That is almost unbelievable. Although that is a very high number, I think it is too high. As you said about measurement, not everybody wants to use digital solutions and so on all the time.

On how those changes came about, it was a mixture of innovation, with companies, civil society and so on, and of government policy. I started work as a late teenager with a guy called Pétur Thorsteinsson, who was a schoolmaster in a rural Icelandic school. He started the Icelandic educational network—the first internet network in Icelandic schools—in 1991. That was almost unheard of at the time.

I went on to start the first internet company for the public in 1993. Having lived in London for seven years, I know that there was a lot of good innovation in those early days in the UK in terms of the internet. Aside from working in the non-profit sector, since 2013 I have helped the banks in Iceland to introduce the e-ID system. That system came about in Iceland not from specific government policy but because of the needs of the banks to have a good identification solution. They went into what was basically a public-private partnership with the Government to

introduce the e-ID to Iceland. That has been a huge enabler for different types of government services such as e-democracy and many others.

Having lived in the UK, I know it is a very different country when it comes to people's expectations around identity, but it would be bad if you could not have a credible e-ID solution for everybody and it was just for those with money or more access to technology. Even if people do not like electronic identification, in the long run that must be one of the pillars of digital inclusion and equalities solutions.

The Chair: That is an interesting point. I heard a discussion on the radio yesterday about the power of e-ID in banks and how that is used in France to address access to pornography in terms of online safety. That technology is being used to solve quite a number of different issues.

In segueing to the next question, one thing we learned through preparing for this session is that, although you have incredible coverage in Estonia and Iceland, you still have quite low levels of take-up or usage of actual services. I will hand over to Lord Hall, who wants to talk about moving more services online.

Q57 Lord Hall of Birkenhead: These questions are mainly to Róbert and Kristina. As I think has been clear, we are after some pragmatic things that could help the UK to do even better with digital inclusion as a result of this report. You both have a lot of experience in some of these things.

Róbert mentioned e-ID. There is the difficulty of getting people who do not have the skills or willingness to go online—or cannot—but from what you said about broadband take-up I assume that that is not the issue. How do you adapt services for people who find it really difficult even to think about what such services might do? How do you help them to move online? What have you done in Iceland that can help? I know that you have done stuff with communities, for example. We would very much like to hear about that.

Róbert Bjarnason: Some people will never want to be online. That is just the fact of it. There might be many different reasons for that, but usually it is the older generations. Even if they have the skills to learn something new, they might decide that they do not want to.

There are a couple of examples. One is from our digital democracy project. Since 2011, we have been running participatory budgeting with the city of Reykjavik, policy crowdsourcing and so on.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead: Can you unpack what that means? What is involved in the budgeting in Reykjavik?

Róbert Bjarnason: Citizens can go online and come up with ideas about how to spend the part of the city's budget that goes on building new things in the city, such as parks and so on. Citizens go online and propose ideas, the city costs them, and then there is a voting phase using e-ID, where citizens vote on exactly what new projects will be built in the city. That has now been going for 10 years. It has always been very popular, but inclusion was a huge issue in the beginning, especially

in 2011 when we did it for the first time. It was just the start of the smartphone revolution; it is hard to even imagine that time.

Most people participating were on their computers and relatively few had working knowledge of computer use. We empowered libraries and city service centres, where people can go in and talk through their idea, and somebody from the city will put it in the system or, if they are voting, they will also help them with that phase. It has evolved over the years, but it is still a service: people can still go to a city service centre to take part in this online project.

It is the same with bank branches. In Iceland, they have been closing very quickly, but they have turned into something different. They are now big branches with a lot of advisers, so that when people come in they get super-useful help. That is the way you have to think. Some people will never want to go online, but many people will, because it is easy, it saves them time and so on.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead: Icelanders seem to be very positive about this, but did you find that with some services you came up against a brick wall, with some people saying, "I just don't get it. I don't want to go there"?

Róbert Bjarnason: Yes, in banking, for example. Even though over 90% of people probably use online banking almost exclusively in Iceland, some people, especially among older generations but some in the younger generation too, just say, "I don't want to use it online. I want to be able to go somewhere". You need to cater for those people; you cannot force them to go online. But the funny thing is that, when a person goes into the bank and is greeted by a person, that person will then take them to a computer terminal to do the transaction on a terminal with them or for them. I think that is the best way, because if you just say, "We can only do this online", if you go out with that view and force people to go online, that will not work, it will not be fair and it will not help people to take up the practice, either.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead: So whatever you are doing, the important thing is getting people to help those who are concerned about bank accounts—and a lot of other things—not on the end of a wire somewhere but by physically being with them.

Róbert Bjarnason: Yes, in community centres, city service centres and libraries. Libraries are underused in a lot of countries, so, yes, absolutely. That will also help people the next time: they might choose to do it online because they do not want to bother with the walk, or something.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead: Yes. They feel confident, in other words. Kristina, I pose the same question to you. What lessons have you learned in Estonia about the difficulty of moving services online when you have a group of people who are resistant?

Kristina Reinsalu: We have done many things similar to what Róbert has described in Iceland. The only difference is that they have had more money, and we need to be even smarter about this. As I mentioned, we

also started in public libraries, in even the smallest rural areas and villages, where we launched free-access internet points with mentors and people who could support other people to get to know the internet and how services function.

As I said, at the same time—in parallel—the Government started quickly to launch many services that, probably to our advantage, did not yet exist in a traditional way. For example, we started with e-banking because there was no western type of banking before. People immediately started to have quite a high level of trust in technology, because they did not have any other experience consuming many services.

It is also important that our approach from the beginning was that we could not force people to use online services—they should still have their alternative possibilities, but we motivated people. The very first e-service in Estonia was online tax declaration, which was a clear motivation for those who were filling these in and submitting them online, because the tax refund money was in their bank accounts within a few weeks or even days, whereas if you still did it on paper in the traditional way you were probably getting your refund in six months or so. There were clear benefits to doing things online, which were obvious to citizens.

Also, a lot of attention was paid to communication, because that is key to creating trust among citizens. Of course, they probably cannot, and should not, understand too many highly technical details, but the more transparent, comprehensive and understandable something is, the more people will trust it.

You mentioned that uptake is probably not very high. In Estonia, usage for most services is close to 90%, or even more, so most people are using services online. I am only half joking when I say that Estonians are probably doing most things online because it is cold outside and we are very introverted people, so we do not want to communicate with anybody, but there are definitely many different success factors.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead: You mentioned tax and that if you are lucky enough to have a tax rebate you get your money quickly. That is a lollipop; I can see that being a plus, with people saying, “Well, in that case, I’ll go online”. Were there other services where the same applied and people suddenly thought, “Hello, there’s a very concrete benefit I’m getting back here, quickly”, that we could learn from?

Kristina Reinsalu: Yes. One of the first sets of services was the one related to child benefit or social support—what we call maternity salary and maternity leave—which young families can apply for when having a baby, for instance. The concept was very logical and pragmatic: we should support young families as they are busy and do not need to go out. Of course, again, it was possible to apply for all those benefits and services by going to offices, but most people did not.

Again, for many young families this was the first contact point with these services, and it was so motivating, simple to use and encouraging, with the benefit of the money coming through very quickly so that you could

have time with the baby instead of running from one office to another. It was a very good starting point. Importantly, they were already using all the other services online.

Lord Young of Norwood Green: I have a question for both of you. Did you find any behaviour changing during the pandemic?

Róbert Bjarnason: Yes, absolutely. It turbocharged the digital transformation in Iceland, as I think it did in many countries. For example, government at all levels used the opportunity to push even further into simplifying all sorts of government services. The pandemic money that became available through the Government and so on was used well in building up better capacity.

Kristina Reinsalu: When distance learning and remote school started, we in Estonia were somehow arrogantly thinking that we did not have any digital divide, but life during Covid showed that we did indeed still have some families who were socially and digitally vulnerable. Certainly, it was very nice that private IT companies and individual citizens put their forces together, and laptops were given to those families. There were huge campaigns, and now all families have laptops for each child.

Q58 The Chair: As we move into the final few minutes and the last question, I will start with Professor Helsper, who has sat there very patiently listening to her colleagues describe what is going on in Estonia and Iceland.

As we wrap up, we are looking for any specific, innovative solutions that we are not taking in the UK which, from where you are sitting—Professor Helsper here in London or either of you in your respective countries—you think we should be adopting, or you would urge us to do. It may be an approach such as e-ID, if that was a catalyst—to return to what Baroness Healy asked earlier—although it does not have to be e-ID. I have to say that because, as acknowledged before, not everybody thinks it a good idea. We are looking for your final recommendations.

Professor Ellen Helsper: I work in the UK, but most of my work is in other countries, and one of the things we do is look at the most effective and sustainable interventions, a topic that came up in the previous session. There are two or three important points.

I do not want to repeat what was said before, but you need a cross-sector and cross-departmental approach where—this must be emphasised—there is never a digital-only solution. If the only solution you are trying is putting content or services in a digital format, or providing digital access, without linking that with policies that deal with the fundamental underlying problems of why some people might be disadvantaged or do not trust education or banking or who are not in the system, those things will fail.

There are good examples in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, where there has been a concerted effort to set up cross-departmental and cross-stakeholder working groups. Interestingly, it existed in the UK and was relatively successful. There has been an explosion of initiatives in the UK,

including during the pandemic. There are many good things going on, but in the digital inclusion working group—it has moved around a bit, but its last home was the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, now renamed—people from industry, academia and the third sector came together and developed a framework that helped people to look at best practice. That has been a bit lost, but I would really recommend that, if you can revive it. That is the first thing.

The Chair: You sat on that. Am I right?

Professor Ellen Helsper: Yes—as, I think, did some of the people you have had here to give evidence. The information is still available online.

The other point, linked to that, is that the most effective and innovative things are those that are targeted, in the sense that they understand specific groups and why they might not feel comfortable doing distance education—online banking was mentioned. This is especially important, because although we have seen rapid digitisation across the world and people taking it up, the people who have dropped out now are exactly the people who did not engage with education before.

It has to be local, and a number of initiatives, including in the UK, have been started to get that kind of data to see what types of things would change if there was a digital transformation in the area. I would encourage doing that and, in countries where they have monitored this over time, seeing what kinds of interventions worked. I still get emails from local government asking me about the digital inclusion heat maps, saying, “This is amazing and would really help us to build local policies, because we can see exactly what kinds of skills are missing”.

That data is somewhere in government, and we have been trying to chase it because the data maps are no longer accessible. That is the second thing. When it was launched it was phenomenally successful and popular, and it would be really great to revive it because it allows people to look at the specific issues. We have learned that that worked very well in the other countries.

The third point is about collateral benefit, beyond just developing a better understanding with the international community. The focus has been on technical skills and programming, and we can see, from what has worked in communities around the world—whether rural or urban, with a lot of money or less money—the collateral benefits of these kinds of softer skills, which are not just about passive use but about being able to understand how technology works and how we might create a digital world that is accessible and useful for others who are not like us, as well as for ourselves.

Those skills have many more benefits, in economics and well-being but also in creating communities of people wanting to participate. That makes them more sustainable, so that people take it up themselves where they live, with the communities and issues that are important for them. Projects are less likely to need constant injections of money and resources, and it creates a kind of network effect, as we might call it, where the externalities are greater than the relatively smaller

investment. Estonia, with its lower resources, also had to create that kind of groundswell of people getting engaged because it is relevant to them and they can see their voices being heard.

The Chair: It is about focusing on and identifying the benefits that are relevant to the people who are not yet engaged.

Professor Ellen Helsper: Yes. Not starting with, “Here is a digital tool or technology. You need to get online because otherwise you can’t get any of this”.

The Chair: Ms Reinsalu, in Estonia. I feel as though I am on the Eurovision Song Contest: come in, Estonia.

Kristina Reinsalu: Lately, we have been really bad at that. I hope we will perform better.

I am also a digital engagement expert, and I would really emphasise here how important bottom-up design and co-creation is nowadays. In Estonia, we started our digital transformation from the top down. At the time that was probably needed because it was a novelty and citizens really did not know what digital meant. Nowadays, our citizens want much more than just provision of ready-made e-services. Citizens really want to be part of co-designing services. They want to crowdsource ideas and problems and be asked to provide solutions and co-create policies and services.

Technology enables all that—it can create a million new opportunities to provide it. Róbert and I are working on many projects together to provide platforms where cities or Governments can talk to and invite citizens to co-create something together. All new e-services should be co-created together and jointly.

There are also many new, interesting opportunities to address our green deal challenges with citizens. Let us signal problems and provide solutions. Only in this motivating way of engaging them from the very beginning can we be sure that they will change—first their attitudes and then their behaviour too.

Róbert Bjarnason: I absolutely agree with what Kristina said. We live in an ever-more complex world, and government has the challenge of keeping up the technology. When it comes to inclusion, even today we have websites that are just screens and screens of text that you have to navigate, which practically excludes many people, sadly. Governments need to work with civil society and citizens on decision-making, co-creating services and policies that are needed, for example, to meet the challenges brought by the artificial intelligence revolution.

People talk about what we can expect in the coming decade: something like the smartphone revolution or even the Industrial Revolution, but it is probably going to be somewhere in the middle. We will be going through a lot of changes, and fast. Working with citizens and civil society, together helping to tackle those problems in a practical way, will create an incentive to be part of the digital society. So many people spend so much time on social media—on TikTok, Instagram and so on—that we

need more opportunities for people to participate in the digital life of our country. It is also a practical way for Governments and politicians to help to make better decisions. In the end, some things are ideological, but most decisions are practical, and together we can make the best decisions.

Finally, as an example of some of the open-source citizen engagement tools that we are creating and have been deploying in all those different countries for all those years, one of the things that we have been working on is an AI assistant. Using artificial intelligence, it helps you to understand the information, makes sure that you have access to all the open data behind it and allows you to participate in an effective way. We also think this is a huge opportunity to democratise access to taking part and helping out with complex decisions. Given the challenge of disinformation and everything else we have constantly going on, we need better opportunities for people to participate.

The Chair: Bearing in mind the barriers that we often hear make it difficult for people to acquire the skills to use the different devices or engage in different services, have any of you explored or thought about the use of things such as voice recognition devices—Alexa, for example—as a way to break down the barrier for those who are currently not adopting digital services? Have you focused on that anywhere?

Professor Ellen Helsper: I am glad to have been given the opportunity to follow up on the examples given. Although bottom up is very important, it is also important to understand that many people, whose interests you are representing, live in circumstances in which they do not have the time or capacity in their lives—they have many issues—to contribute in a positive sense. Often, it is certain types of citizens who take this up, who have the skills to participate in that way. These debates are often quite complex; they use a language that is not necessarily the language of the people represented by the issues you are trying to solve.

In other countries, different ways of participating have been provided that might not be the ways in which we have traditionally used—the consultations and people writing things down—but things like seeing something happening, uploading a photo on to a map and saying, “This is where the problem is”. In that sense, it is using the kinds of technology and platforms that people are using—Instagram, TikTok and Facebook were mentioned—to give people opportunities where they are, as something is happening, rather than asking them to participate in something that has been set up.

The kind of language used is very important to give people the opportunity to do that. It can be visual or oral language, such as leaving voice messages or getting a response that is oral or visual, rather than, “This is what we’ve done. This is the solution”. Otherwise, the digitised democratic process of giving access to consultation will lead to bigger inequalities in who actually gets to decide what the country—the digital nation—might look like and what kinds of improvements or interventions might be done in future.

Lord Young of Norwood Green: Do you find that there is an intergenerational influence? In the UK, for example, children educate their grandparents because they want to get in contact on Zoom. That is quite a powerful incentive. The grandchildren are very good at doing this. Do you have similar experiences in Estonia and Iceland?

Kristina Reinsalu: Yes, indeed. As I mentioned, one of the first nationwide projects was to computerise schools. Kids can be good teachers for their parents and grandparents. As far as I know, many later start-ups grew out of that, because playing, gaming and so on is also hugely important when we want people to be included and really motivated to use technology. Bringing those kids, especially from vulnerable environments, those possibilities, and even playing, gaming and getting to know technology, is a big step forward.

I could not agree more with Professor Helsper: we should indeed start very early. It is very effective when we start digitally activating kids, giving them some very simple tools to let them decide on small things, such as using technology to take photos and send them, and maybe adding something. It is very important not to create more barriers with technologies but to let people use all the different possible tools available.

Róbert Bjarnason: The generational gap shrunk a lot when everybody had a smartphone in their hands. Suddenly we went from, "Oh no, I'm not getting a computer", to everybody having a computer in their hand. It was a very similar experience.

On using the Alexa interface and so on, as part of our platform we are launching a sort of ChatGPT integration where you can talk about all the digital democracy projects that our partners are doing, including, very importantly, being able to simplify concepts and to change something from a government voice to a regular voice, for example.

On the inclusion part, it is really important that civil society is also part of this, for people who do not have the resources to represent themselves in those projects. Otherwise, we will miss out on a lot of good ideas.

The Chair: We have been very fortunate to avoid being disrupted by a Division, and we have managed, with everybody's co-operation, to cover the ground that we hoped to, so thank you very much. As Lord Kamall asked our two colleagues in Europe, if you are able to provide any further information about how you measure the impact of your own digital inclusion programmes over there, that would be helpful. Of course, you can also offer us any thoughts on how the UK compares to your country in that context; we would be very grateful to receive that. I am very grateful to all three of you.