



# CONNECT & VOUS

# FACT SHEET 7

Reducing the digital divide for those who are losing their independence or have a disability



## PRESENTATION

Digital technology is everywhere, but it is not accessible to everyone. Indeed, many people do not have access to digital tools due to a lack of knowledge or due to a loss of autonomy or a disability (motor, sensory, learning disabilities, etc.). They are therefore among those most affected by the digital divide, which generates social exclusion and also constitutes a factor limiting access to rights, social life, culture, employment, education, etc.



Open to all and free of charge, "Connect & Vous" is the name of a digital access point and a system created in Lille by the APF France Handicap association.

Digital mediators welcome the public and are available to support individuals according to their needs and their level of knowledge and proficiency with digital tools and services. Computers are freely accessible. Smartphones and tablets are also available. All digital tools are adapted for people with disabilities, allowing them to find the right technical solution for their needs. Visitors are invited to test a range of adapted tools for free: reading glasses, mice, ergonomic keyboards, connected buttons, articulated arms for taking images (photos and videos), musical instruments... All the latest tools at the cutting edge of technological innovation!

## CONNECT & VOUS

### IN A FEW WORDS

"Connect & Vous" is an inclusive digital mediation service implemented by APF France Handicap in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions. This program, supported by European funding and the Caf du Nord, aims to support people with disabilities, the elderly, and anyone at risk in learning and using digital tools, in order to promote their social inclusion and access to their rights.

### IN A FEW NUMBERS

The program mobilizes around twenty digital mediators spread across more than **30 reception points** in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions. Since its launch, **several thousand people with disabilities, the elderly, or those in precarious situations** have received support, with a clear objective: to reduce inequalities in access to digital technology and promote independence.



Would you like to know more?

<https://nord.apf-francehandicap.org/connect-vous->

## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

The "Connect & Vous" project relies on strong partnerships to ensure truly inclusive digital mediation. Led by APF France Handicap, it mobilizes a network of local stakeholders committed to supporting people with disabilities or loss of autonomy: grassroots associations, social centers, local authorities, medical-social facilities, Maisons France Services, specialized institutions, and social housing providers. The professionals of the APF France Handicap "TechLab," specialized in technology monitoring and experts in this field, provide support to facilitate access to digital technology as much as possible and generate user interest.

These partnerships make it possible to identify audiences, co-develop initiatives tailored to local needs, and strengthen the program's local roots. The project also receives financial support from the Caf du Nord (French Family Allowance Fund), the European Social Fund, and institutional stakeholders, which contribute to its sustainability and outreach.

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

The "Connect & Vous" project faced several obstacles, including a lack of awareness of digital mediation tools among the target audience, the difficulty of engaging some people who were very isolated or lacking confidence, and the lack of accessibility of certain online tools and services.

To address these challenges, the team implemented concrete solutions: outreach activities carried out directly in living spaces (residential homes, institutions, social services), personalized and progressive teaching methods, and the use of materials adapted to different types of disabilities.

Close collaboration with medical and social partners also helped to better identify needs and establish a climate of trust.

Finally, ongoing training for digital mediators on disability and accessibility issues is an essential lever for removing barriers and ensuring quality support.



## VISION OF THE FUTURE

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# POSTURE OF THE DIGITAL MEDIATOR

Digital mediators supporting people with disabilities or loss of autonomy must adopt a deeply caring, patient, and person-centered approach.

It is essential that they start with each person's abilities, needs, and pace, without ever projecting standardized or patronizing expectations.

They must create a climate of trust, reassurance, and empowerment, in which mistakes are allowed and learning becomes possible.

Active listening is essential, as is adaptability: adapting tools, teaching formats, language, but also body postures and ways of interacting.

Mediators must also be attentive to cognitive fatigue, physical, sensory, or psychological barriers, demonstrating flexibility and creativity.

Finally, they must always keep in mind that their role is not to do things for others, but to make them possible and accessible, while respecting the dignity, free choice, and agency of each person.



## SPECIFICITIES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

People with disabilities or loss of autonomy have specific needs that digital mediators must be aware of in order to tailor their support.

This population is extremely diverse, with very varied needs depending on the type of disability (motor, sensory, cognitive, mental) or level of dependency. Some may have difficulty concentrating, memorizing, or navigating digital interfaces, while others may encounter physical obstacles to using the equipment.

The relationship with digital technology can also be marked by strong apprehension, a lack of self-confidence, or a feeling of exclusion. Furthermore, the social and emotional context plays an important role: isolation, dependence on a caregiver, or a lack of appropriate resources can exacerbate the digital divide.

The mediator must therefore demonstrate vigilance, sensitivity, and a strong ability to adapt, relying, if necessary, on technical aids and accessible software, and collaborating with loved ones or medical-social professionals already involved with the individual.

