

Report of TT Meeting Social Inclusion on 10 December 2020

TT Meeting:

TT Social Inclusion: Digital Inclusion and Exclusion during the Corona Pandemic

Participant list:

Detmold:

- Tabea Beer (Social Affairs)
- Sandra Müller (Chief Digital Officer)

Gävle:

- Annika Lundqvist (International Affairs)

Hasselt:

- Nadia Elsen (Social Affairs)
- Robbe Martens (Social Affairs)
- Leen Scheelen (International Affairs)
- Miet Vanderspikken (Cabinet Employee)

Jyväskylä:

- Salla Pykälämäki (Digital Services Development)
- Satu Heikkinen (International Relations Manager)

Reggio Emilia:

- Marina Feretti (Department for Planning, Programming and Control Services)
- Marianna Roscelli (International Affairs)

Roeselare:

- Bruno Daems (Project Manager)
- Gino Dehullu (Senior Strategic Advisor)

Sindelfingen:

- Jana Kastner (Social Affairs)
- Miriam Ley (Social Affairs)
- Julian Schahl (International Affairs)
- Manuel Glattbach (International Affairs)

Solingen:

- Martin Hückeler (European Affairs)

Varberg:

- Magnus Eriksson (Development Strategist)
- Kristina Hylander (Development Officer)
- Konstantia Karagianaki (Youth Coach)
- Mawia Hussein Mohammed (Culture Coach)
- Marcel Molombo (Youth Coach)
- Anna Nilsson (Unit Manager Active Leisure)

- Kerstin Nilsson (Communication)
- Lotta Olanya (Inclusion Strategist)

Agenda:

13.00-13.10 Introduction and presentation

13.10-13.30 Academic input given by keynote speaker Prof. Dr. Ilse Mariën from Brussels University VUB

13.30-14.00 Participants' best experiences and best practices on digital inclusion (short presentations)

14.00-14.40 Subgroup discussions

14.40-15.00 Plenary feedback, conclusions and next steps

Brief Summary:

After a short introduction and the presentation of the meeting's agenda, keynote speaker Prof. Dr. Ilse Mariën from Brussels University VUB provided an academic input on digital inclusion and exclusion from a theoretical perspective. She mentioned the social and digital factors/indicators determining in- and exclusion and concluded that during the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen that anyone can be digitally excluded. Afterwards, she shortly presented the project of three Belgian cities to establish so-called digitally inclusive neighbourhoods and pointed out that solutions must be tailor-made and suit to their respective target group. In the second part, the cities of Reggio Emilia, Roeselare, Solingen, Jyväskylä, Hasselt, Gävle and Varberg presented their best practices, which was followed by subgroup discussions. While three groups talked about how local authorities, civil society and private actors can cooperate when citizens are disconnected from the internet and computers, another group explored the different approaches to inclusive digital services set into place by the participating cities. In the end, we concluded that digital inclusion can only be achieved locally, from a bottom-up perspective and in cooperation with local partners. It is crucial that we identify those who are disconnected. Also, an exchange of knowledge, best practices and expertise is necessary and constantly needs to be on the agenda as a main issue in future discussions. The information on local policies in Belgian cities (digitally inclusive neighbourhoods) will be shared with the network since this could be inspiring for all ET members.

Conclusions / Lessons learnt:

Input by Prof. Dr. Ilse Mariën:

- There are social and digital factors determining in- and exclusion.
- social factors/indicators: employment, education, participation in a global perspective, agency related to the decision-making process as well as well-being
- digital factors/indicators: ASA (access, skills and attitude), autonomy of use, soft skills, communication skills, user practices, media richness of the personal environment
- Social as well as digital factors range from deep exclusion to inclusion.

- People can be socially included and digitally excluded and vice versa. → How are these two kinds of factors interlinked?
- The socially most vulnerable groups are those who are digitally most excluded.
- During Covid-19, we have seen that anyone can be digitally excluded.
- short presentation of the so-called digitally inclusive neighbourhoods → joint project by three Belgian cities
- solutions must be tailor-made and suit to their respective target group

Best Practices:

All presentations can be downloaded via the following link: <https://sifi-files.kdrs.de/s/ZMMM7Jk535DpKQJ>

- Reggio Emilia: presentation via link above
- Detmold:
 - still in lockdown, number of Covid-19 infections very high
 - tried to make it possible that the communication still works (e.g. got mobile phones for their teams)
 - language barrier still a problem since German language skills of their target groups (especially refugees) are in some cases not developed enough
 - → participation during Covid-19 has become very difficult → still trying to find new ways of participation
- Roeselare: presentation via link above
- Sindelfingen:
 - 2021: first digital election of the youth council
 - 7,000 teenagers eligible to vote
 - aim: maintaining a high voter turnout
 - obstacles:
 - different kinds of problems, of which only some can be solved
 - election process should be integrated into class at schools → smartphones forbidden in some schools → don't want to exclude teenagers who don't own a smartphone since no one should be stigmatized
- Solingen: presentation via link above
- Jyväskylä: presentation via link above
- Hasselt: presentation via link above
- Gävle: presentation via link above
- Varberg: presentation via link above

Subgroup Discussions:

Group 1 on Theme 1 (How can local authorities, civil society and private actors cooperate when citizens are disconnected from the internet and computers?):

- challenges:
 - We have to be aware of the dark sides of the internet, like "in cell movement".
 - growing problem in times when the world is becoming more and more digital and loneliness is increasing during the pandemic
 - When we can't meet the youth face to face, it is difficult to handle the dark sides of the internet by dialogue and discussions.
 - We have to take care of both the outsiders and the groups who are

- not there when we can't meet them in real life.
 - fake news and source criticism as part of the problem
 - also a question of education
 - keeping up to date with the different platforms where people are acting and providing the regular services at the same time
 - Many platforms are places where we are not allowed to be since we are restricted in terms of GDPR. We sometimes have to use our personal accounts to communicate with different groups because we have to be where the people are. Then, professional life and private life are at risk of getting mixed.
 - not enough knowledge, always a bit behind
- positive experience: We have been forced to learn about a lot of new platforms.
- development possibilities:
 - We always have to be ahead.
 - insert translators into websites
 - education has to step up
 - We are not only service providers, but can also use our target groups to communicate with other groups.
 - We have to find ways to be accessible on a broader basis.

Group 2 on Theme 1:

- How to identify the groups of people being disconnected from the internet? → e.g. in supermarkets, libraries, health care institutions
- talked about the projects with private partners (e.g. ARhus in Roeselare, which was presented by Bruno)
- groups of people that are most often forgotten: people with disabilities, prisoners, illegal immigrants
- lifelong learning: things are changing very quickly → The different generations have to interact in order to be able to learn from each other.

Group 3 on Theme 1:

best practices:

- language café (Varberg):
 - When the physical meeting place was not available anymore due to Covid-19, the café was transformed into digital meetings via Teams, Skype and Zoom.
 - staff first had to be trained to use the new tools
 - +: language training continued, contact with newcomers could be established
 - -: problems with GDPR, only a temporary service in response to Covid-19, the physical café provided more services, which are missing now
- online questionnaire (Sindelfingen):
 - conduction of an online survey for children before the construction of a playground
 - survey was sent to the parents, links were posted on posters in the city and announced in the newspapers
 - +: many more children reached than usually → will continue after Covid-19
 - -: GDPR, parents always have to give their permission for their children to participate

Group 4 on Theme 2 (Public digital services):

- exploring the different approaches to inclusive digital services set into place by the participating cities
- Marianna shared Reggio Emilia's voucher system for people much affected by Covid-19 (see presentation above)
- After this, there was a discussion on people who lack confidence on authorities and therefore will not use any digital device because they are afraid of their digital identity being stolen.
- Another example is people that have access to and the tools to be able to inform themselves on facts, restrictions and so on, but will not. For example, Solingen's digital information screens with all the information the citizens need don't solve the problem that there are people who want to stay ignorant.
- Another example from Reggio Emilia is that the Mayor has a live chat on Facebook every day at the same hour, that over time has become more and more popular.
- There were also discussions on how important communication is and which language should be used in municipal information in order to be understandable. Also, there was a discussion on the importance of translating information in order to be able to reach other language groups. How and where we communicate is crucial!

→ Ilse Marien:

- Digital inclusion can only be achieved locally, from a bottom-up perspective and in cooperation with local partners. → top-down approach won't work
- identify those who are disconnected
- exchange of knowledge, best practices and expertise necessary and needs to be on the agenda more often → take it up as one of the main issues in future discussions

Next Steps:

- information on local policies in Belgian cities (digitally inclusive neighbourhoods) will be shared with the network since this could be inspiring for all ET members

Screenshot:

