

Digital inclusion policies need to focus on the social, not the digital

[This European Commission review](#) looks at current digital inclusion policies formulated within the context of economic crises, increasing socio-economic inequalities and a call for evidence-based policy-making. It notes that national and regional digital inclusion policies show digital inclusion as being central to social inclusion, and argues that

'The most important issue facing the development of digital inclusion policy is when social issues are decoupled from the specific needs of the target groups... Target groups for digital inclusion initiatives are typically selected on the basis of their digital deficits, rather than on the basis of the social issues that digital inclusion policies aim to tackle.'

The review adds that policies need to be 'more specific about what types of access, skills training, motivation and content provision are most useful for which groups, based on an identification of the specific social issues present in vulnerable or excluded groups. Policies need thus to go beyond digital access and standard skills and focus on addressing those social issues through digital resources.'

Key conclusions:

- there is a need for a more accurate definition of the needs of the target groups and the specific fields of action that a policy intervention works with, not in a digital, but in a social sense;
- evidence needs to be gathered about which digital interventions work for the specific target populations that suffer from the social issues identified;
- it is currently unclear which actors can and need to be involved, and how these can be coordinated to achieve the most efficient, effective and sustainable impact on socio-economic inclusion.

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Source: Helsper, E. [Harnessing ICT for social action, a digital volunteering programme](#). European Commission.