

# IDEALiC

## Inclusion through Digital Empowerment and Autonomy across the Life Course

**DURATION**  
15/12/2014 - 15/03/2019

**BUDGET**  
764 656 €

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION



The ongoing digitisation of services – both public and private – has led to an increased risk amongst the general population of being or becoming digitally excluded. The so-called digital turn is posing a threat for all individuals that do not have the necessary digital skills to handle the digitisation of the various life domains. Though significant scientific effort is given to research on e-inclusion in Flanders, Wallonia and Belgium, knowledge is lacking about the extent to which the digitisation of services, routines and practices is hampering the ability of individuals to participate fully in society. Recent studies have shown that the socio-economic background of individuals no longer solely defines digital exclusion and that mechanisms of digital exclusion go beyond socio-economic vulnerable groups.

This implies that there is no longer a clear view on the groups at-risk of being or becoming digitally excluded. The traditionally defined two-folded and dichotomous categories of included versus excluded population groups – e.g. rich versus poor; young versus old; or male versus female – are no longer valid. New and more contextualised approaches are therefore needed to identify those at-risk of being digitally excluded. Research by experts in the field emphasises that digital skills and the ability to deal with digital media in an autonomous and strategic way are of increasing importance to ensure one's full societal participation. This move towards strategic goals and added value gained through the use of digital media is also visible at the level of e-inclusion policies that have shifted from the mere provision of physical access to broader societal goals such as empowerment, inclusion and participation.

The IDEALiC project aims to address these issues by focusing on setting the new scene of e-inclusion for the upcoming years. The central research question of the IDEALiC project is how e-inclusion policies and initiatives can provide solutions for the mechanisms of digital exclusion that coincide with the digital turn. With this research, the project partners aim at taking e-inclusion research in Belgium to the next level by applying an innovative approach at theoretical, empirical and policy level.

The IDEALiC project is built upon an interdisciplinary methodological approach that combines qualitative user-oriented research, comparative research, policy analysis, and a basic quantitative data-analysis from existing data sources. More specifically, the IDEALiC research will focus on following aspects:

- Provide renewed insights on the aspects that define autonomous and independent use of ICT based on existing frameworks for digital skills.
- Critically review the recent evolution of e-inclusion policies towards an increased focus on aspects as empowerment, inclusion and participation. What exactly is meant by these concepts and what kind of normative interpretations does this imply for e-inclusion strategies, both at the level of policy, implementation and evaluation?
- Provide a state of the art of the current situation of the e-inclusion field in Belgium (i.e. actors and policy fields), complemented by a critical reflection on how an ideal e-inclusion policy in Belgium should be constructed at local, regional and (inter)national level.
- Deliver a renewed state of the art of figures on e-inclusion in Belgium, based upon a basic quantitative analysis of secondary data that is readily available.



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- Carry out an empirical study that examines experiences of e-inclusion from a life course perspective and a user media profile viewpoint, rather than from a two-folded and dichotomous view based upon socio-economic variables. In-depth interviews will be carried out with respondents that belong to three different life stages: (1) age 18 to 30 (i.e. the period in which individuals are building up autonomy and steadily increase their social, economic and political participation in society; (2) age 31 to 50 (i.e. the period in which individuals are assumed to have developed autonomy and participate fully in society; and (3) age 51-70 (i.e. the period in which they desire to remain active participants of society and to remain independent while aging is considered an important policy challenge).
- Study the relationship between the suppliers of digitised services and citizens. This part will provide answers on questions such as: Do institutions at the supply side reflect upon mechanisms of digital exclusion when digitising their services? Or, to what extent do they undertake actions to ensure all citizens are capable of using their digitised services in an autonomous way? This will be done by means of three case studies, i.e. mobility, mutual health insurances, brussels.be portal.
- Use an actor-driven and participatory approach in order to include actors from policy, public service, private sector, civil society, poverty organisations and similar institutions in the development of e-inclusion policy recommendations to ensure an effective take-up and implementation of the research results.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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