



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Empowerment to overcome the digital divide – Civil Society Days 2018

Accessibility, co-creation and territorial cohesion identified as key policy issues for digital inclusion at the Civil Society Days 2018

For the Civil Society Days 2018, AGE Platform Europe and the European Disability Forum organized yesterday a joint workshop on [Empowerment to overcome the digital divide](#), in which three main recommendations were identified to support equal access to digital technologies.

Many obstacles are still preventing you to access new technologies, in particular when you are older, have a disability or live in a rural area. How can we empower ALL citizens to take part in our increasingly digitalized society? And what priority actions need to be taken to overcome the digital divide? Those were the questions AGE Platform European and the European Disability Forum sought to answer in a joint workshop together with representatives of EU institutions and non-for-profit associations.

“Information and communication technologies can empower people but also disable them when there are the only option available but cannot be used or accessed”, said Julia Wadoux, Policy coordinator at AGE Platform Europe, insisting that ***“Equal access has to be part of the Multiannual Financial Framework of the European Commission”***.

“We need a strong framework to mainstream accessibility in sectorial legislation to understand what it means in practice”, called Alejandro Moledo, New Technologies & Innovation Officer at the European Disability Forum (EDF). ***“Access to ICT is a human right. This is why we need strong, binding accessibility legislation at all levels”,*** he added after reminding that the European Union and all EU Member States have now signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The issues that need to be tackled to support digital inclusion for all were presented by the different speakers and covered accessibility, affordability, broadband coverage, co-creation, design for all, digital citizenship grant, standardisation, statistics, territorial cohesion and training. Out of them the following three recommendations were identified as key by participants:

1/ Accessibility

Accessibility should walk the same path as security or data protection. It should be a core aspect of ICT products and services.

2/ Co-creation

All persons, including older persons and persons with disabilities, should be involved from the outset in the development of ICT to make them fit for their needs and wishes.

3/ Territorial cohesion

Adopt a European rural agenda to recognise the specific challenges rural areas face and ensure an integrated development and territorial cohesion.

AGE and EDF will now closely monitor the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) process to ensure that equal access is mainstreamed in the next EU programmes and policies, and that these recommendations are taken on board.

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Useful links

- [Workshop 'Empowerment to overcome the digital divide'](#)
- [Civil Society Days webpage](#)
- [Mobile Age project website](#)
- [PROGRESSIVE project website](#)

Note to the editor

About AGE Platform Europe:



AGE is a European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+ aiming to voice and promote the interests of the 190 million citizens aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. www.age-platform.eu

About the European Disability Forum:



The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that defends the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. This unique platform brings together representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. www.edf-feph.org

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