Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Symposium: Connecting the dots: young people, social inclusion and digitalisation (Tallinn, 26 – 28 June 2018)

The symposium 'Connecting the Dots: Young People, Social Inclusion and Digitalisation' was an initiative of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The event was organised in co-operation with the Youth Affairs Department of the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia. It brought together 111 youth policy-makers, youth researchers, and youth workers and representatives of civil society, with the aim of **exploring the intersection between social inclusion of young people and digitalisation**.

The event provided a unique opportunity for participants to learn, exchange ideas, critically discuss topics, identify opportunities and challenges and arrive at key messages concerning the digital transformation of society in the context of the youth field and social inclusion of young people. The symposium facilitated the identification of issues and responses of youth policy, youth research and youth work at local, national and international levels. What follows is the policy brief which resulted from this event.

Key messages for youth policy

Access	Policy makers should prioritise and ensure "access to the internet as a human right in Europe".
Awareness	• Policy makers should support a geo-coordinated European map populated with relevant regional, national, European data that visualises youth centres/services and related services and opportunities. • There should be more funding to support awareness of available services such as e-participatory mechanisms and web-based interventions.
Balanced approach	The youth field must ensure digital aspects to youth work are complementary and/or enhancing, and do not replace or diminish traditional or "offline" approaches which are vital to the mission of youth work in tackling social exclusion of young people.
Co-creation	• Policy makers should support a co-ordinated response to issues of hate speech that brings together all relevant stakeholders and initiatives in the process from NGOs to national institutions to social media platform providers. Such approaches increase impact and effectiveness. • Policy makers should emphasise multi-stakeholder involvement in the design and implementation of youth-related policy, research and

	practice from problem formulation through to implementation. • They should ensure co-creation involving those socially excluded as a core principle for both online and offline policy and service design for young people. Prescribed methodologies for effective co-creation in different contexts should be developed.
Communication	Policy makers should promote youth-friendly language, attractive visualisations, etc. and easy-to-digest ways of communicating official documents, relevant governmental information and services, including legal information.
Corporate social responsibility	Policy makers should formulate measures, recommendations and promote "corporate social responsibility" of web-based platforms in terms of ameliorating practices that lead to social exclusion of young people.
Data, algorithms	• Policy and legislative mechanisms should be explored around addressing the threats and harms of "algorithms" in making decisions that affect young people in both the public and private spheres. (These algorithms may relate to such aspects as facial recognition, or social media data analysis.) • Youth-friendly language, brevity and priority of consequences of how young people's data is protected and used should be communicated by online websites and platforms. This should also be the case for communicating overall terms and conditions on internet sites.
Digital transformation	• Policy makers should devise a European policy framework that addresses emerging opportunities and challenges of digital transformation for different cohorts of young people in society, particularly those socially excluded or at risk. • Policy makers should ensure adequate funding for research needed in relation to digital transformation, youth field and social inclusion.
Discrimination	Policy makers should ensure funding and support for implementation of long-term focused campaigns to raise awareness and understanding of online anti-social behaviour leading to social exclusion of young people (such as "hate speech", "doxing", "trolling", "cyber-bullying", etc.)
Education	• Policy makers should seek to implement policy, research and practice that focus on educating the perpetrators of hate speech in addition to removing their content. • There should be a strong commitment to digital competency curricula and wider theoretical and practical related curricula around digitalisation at primary and post-primary level in terms of formal educational settings. • There should be a co-ordinated response between formal and non-formal education in relation to digital competences and wider theoretical and practical knowledge around digitalisation for young people. • There should be adequate funding, training and support for youth workers to develop competencies for smart/digital youth work.

Knowledge exchange	Policy makers should support peer exchange and shadowing programmes in relation to youth policy makers, researchers and youth workers in relation to digitalisation. Such initiatives can exchange knowledge and understandings in terms of such aspects as opportunities and risks of digitalisation.
Mobility	Policy makers should ensure additional funding for mobility-related programmes dedicated to empowerment and resilience for those socially excluded, and to enable and encourage their participation in such programmes.
Opportunity costs	Policy measures should seek to identify and address opportunity costs where digital access and literacy barriers affect young people. For example, those digitally excluded may have higher costs to access services.
Participation	- Policy makers should develop co-ordinated and sufficiently funded regional, national and European efforts on digital (e-)participatory mechanisms for young people, particularly those socially excluded or at risk. - Digital participatory mechanisms should be in place for young people to inform various institutions and organisation of their "needs" at the local and national level. - Special consideration should be given to involving vulnerable and excluded groups in political and policy decisions, by ensuring they have capacity and confidence to participate. For example, will they be intimidated by those with more human and social capital? Have they opportunities to participate in a safe space?
Partners	Policy makers should devise and encourage where appropriate public-private partnership models to enable, support and enhance digital youth services and interventions.
Reach	- Policy makers should ensure a digital dimension to regional, national and international public programmes to ensure young people can be reached and have the opportunity to engage. - There should be funding and support to develop and showcase best practice responses that are successfully "initiating" engagement with young people at risk or suffering social exclusion.
Recognition	There should be more recognition and utilisation of "youth workers" as gatekeepers of knowledge and insight into young people's lives (in relation to digitalisation and social exclusion).
Resources	There should be sufficient funding and support for equipping youth centres with digital resources needed to deliver services and interventions.
Trust	Policy makers should ensure mechanisms are in place on digital services such as e-participatory mechanisms to relay or give feedback to users on how their active participation really influenced decisions and actions.